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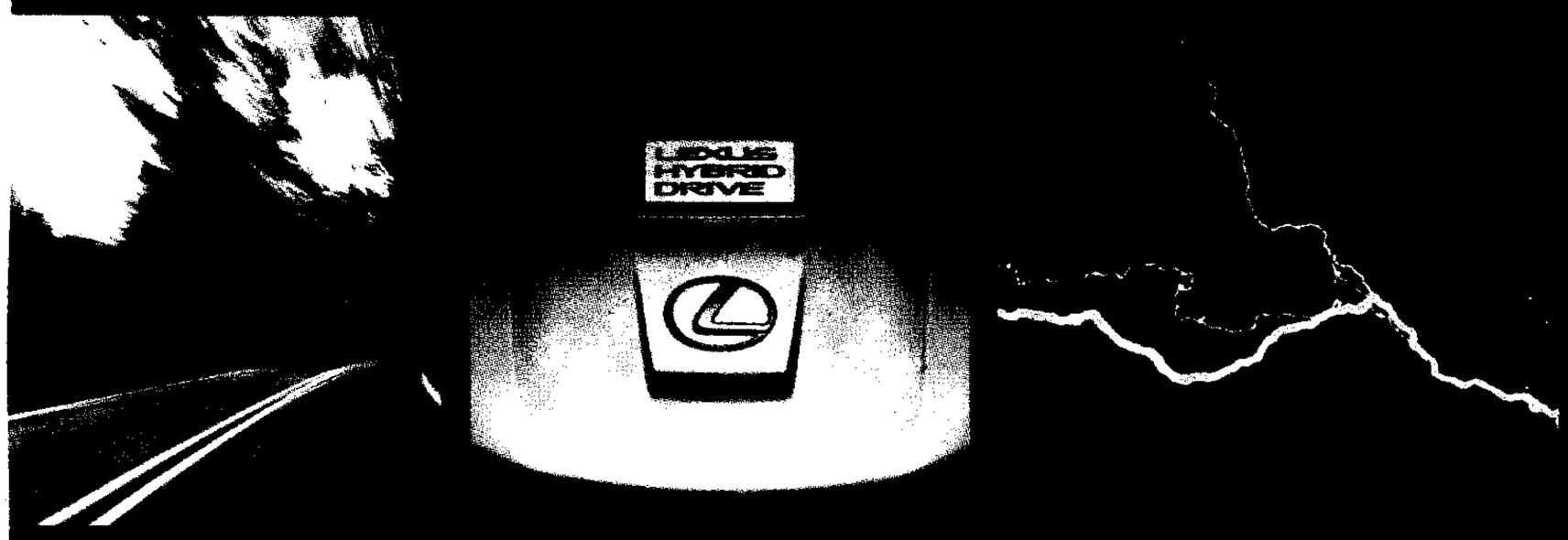

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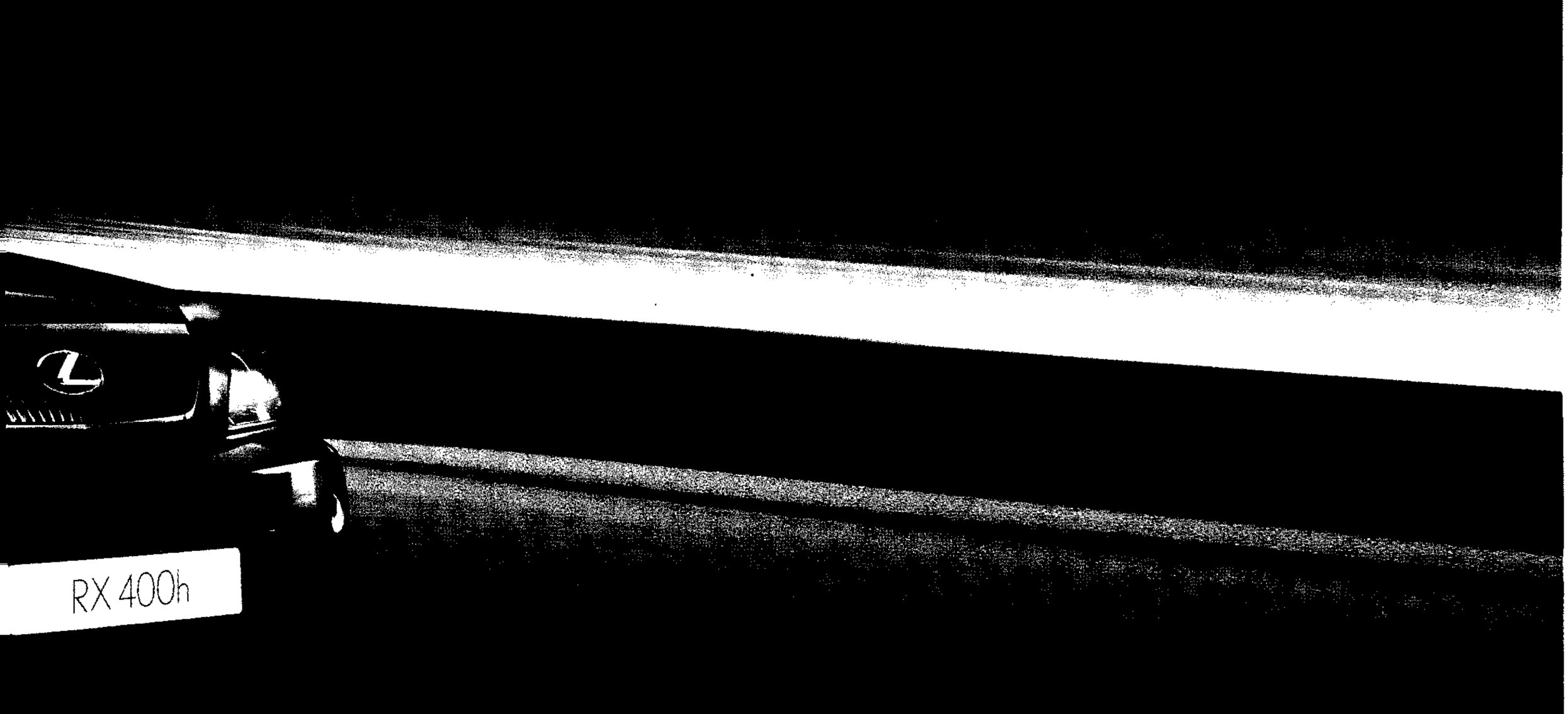

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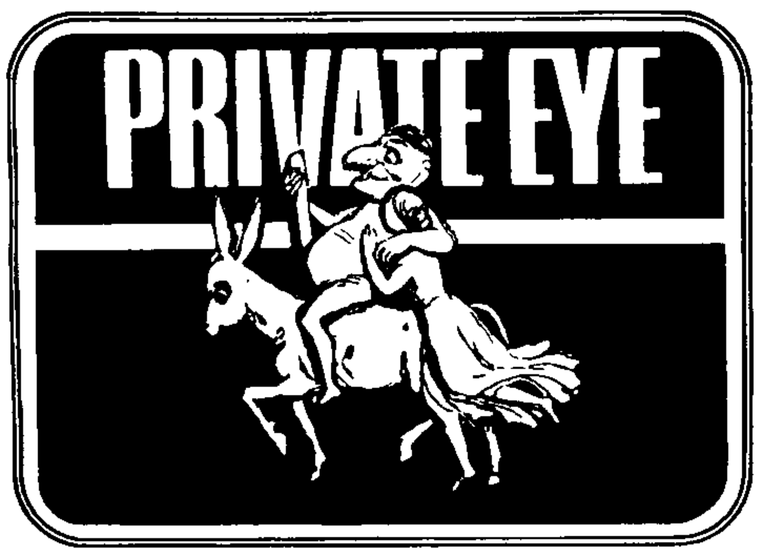

Diamond edition

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HOW vulnerable are British banks and other lenders in these turbulent, credit-crunching times? Alistair Darling, who himself has a Northern Rock mortgage, offered the Commons this reassurance last month: "British institutions have less direct exposure to sub-prime assets and our sub-prime market share – 5 per cent – is much lower than that of the US."

So that's all right then. But where did his 5 percent figure come from? As the *FT* points out: "Some City analysts have estimated that levels of sub-prime lending in Britain could be 12 percent or more" – and, since even that excludes some lending practices that are classified as sub-prime in the US, the true comparative figure could be higher still.

After badgering by Liberal Democrat peers, the Treasury has at last come clean. It admitted this week that although the phrase "sub-prime" has a consistent and well-understood definition in the United States, "there is no such clear definition for the phrase in the UK... sub-prime has no distinct meaning in the UK." In short, Darling's statement was meaningless – and misleading.

Time was when ministers who misled the House were expected to apologise. Will this quaint old tradition be revived to mark Gordon Brown's commitment to candour and openness?

• *Northern Wreck; Lord Airmiles of Chichester, 30*

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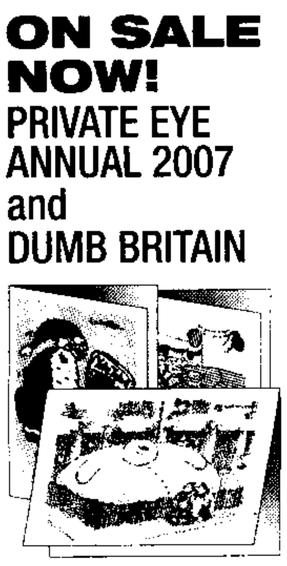

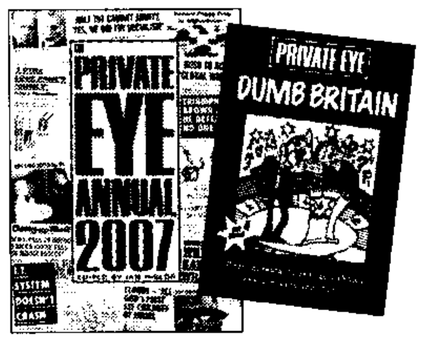

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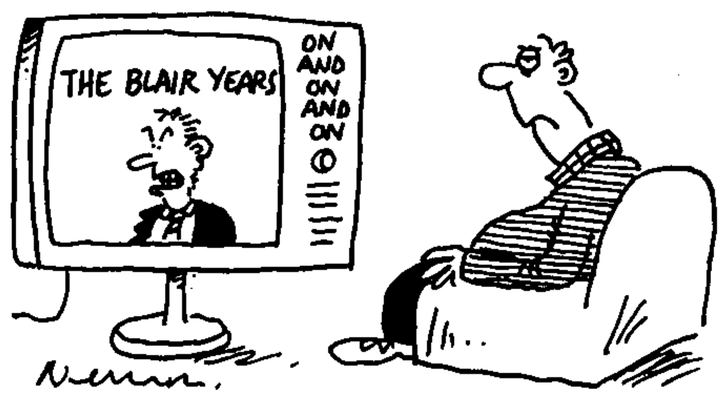
ABC

WHEN is Gordon Brown's citizen's jury not a citizen's jury? When it is a "deliberative event", apparently.

The *Eye* has already highlighted how the PM was employing his private pollster Deborah Mattinson's old company, Opinion Leader Research, to secure endorsements for controversial health, nuclear and education programmes (see *Eye* 1195). Readers may recall that Opinion Leader, self-proclaimed experts in "thought leadership" and a subsidiary of Lord Bell's Chime Group, was handing out £75 in brown envelopes to those who attended.

However, following an education and children's services jury in Bristol, attended by Brown himself and billed on the Downing Street website as "the first citizen's jury", one local resident and *Eye* reader wrote to the government asking how the "jury" was selected.

His reply from the Governance of Britain division of the Ministry of Justice said the event in Bristol "was not a citizen's jury in the truest sense. It was more of a deliberative event to launch the 'time to talk' consultation". So what does that make all the others?



SINCE they don't appear to spend their time counting the number of foreign workers in the UK, what do civil servants at the Home Office actually get up to?

A clue is provided by a ten-point checklist recently distributed to 5,000 staff at the department and its agencies on handy wipe-clean, wallet-sized cards, aimed presumably at improving the department's fitness for purpose.

It reminds them to "greet stakeholders personally where possible", "turn up to meetings on time", "record stakeholder contacts on the stakeholder database", "involve them in policy and blue sky thinking," and, most vitally, "invite them to parties".

NUMBER CRUNCHING

65% rise in staffing numbers of security services since terror attacks of 2001

550% rise in Home Office spending on management consultants since 2001

- Women drinkers are fit to burst
- In pictures: Fears of flooding

BBC News website

HOW slowly the wheels of justice turn. Immediately after Barry George's conviction in the autumn of 2001 for the murder of broadcaster Jill Dando, the *Eye* and others took apart the evidence used to secure the guilty verdict on the Fulham "weirdo".

Even the *Daily Telegraph* pointed out that there was no weapon, no confession, no evidence of an obsession with Jill Dando, no motive – and nothing to put Barry George at her house at the fatal time.

But it took more than six years to persuade the Court of Appeal to quash the conviction and order a retrial on the basis of fresh scientific evidence relating to a tiny particle of firearms discharge residue, said to have been found in George's overcoat a year after the murder – one of the four categories of "circumstantial" evidence relied upon by prosecutors.

Experts from the Forensic Science Service now say that "it was in fact no more likely that the particle had come from a gun fired by Barry George than that it had come from some other source". That, however, was the thrust of the defence expert evidence of Dr John Lloyd at the Old Bailey trial six years ago, along with the suggestion of contamination from the police photo lab.

THE wheels have moved even slower in the investigation of the 1992 murder of Rachel Nickell, but as the *Eye* went to press, Scotland Yard was said to be "edging closer" to charging a Broadmoor inmate with the crime.

The man, held indefinitely at Broadmoor for the murder of a woman and her four-year-old daughter, was named in the *Eye* by Paul Foot as a "more promising subject" for investigation than Colin Stagg, who was acquitted in 1994.

In 1997 Foot wrote that the man, "who pleaded guilty, admitted to three other rapes in South London, all with a knife, all on common land... The police and the prosecution in [the] case were all struck by the similarities [to the murder of Rachel Nickell] and said so." But he was ruled out of the inquiry as detectives focused on Stagg as their main suspect.

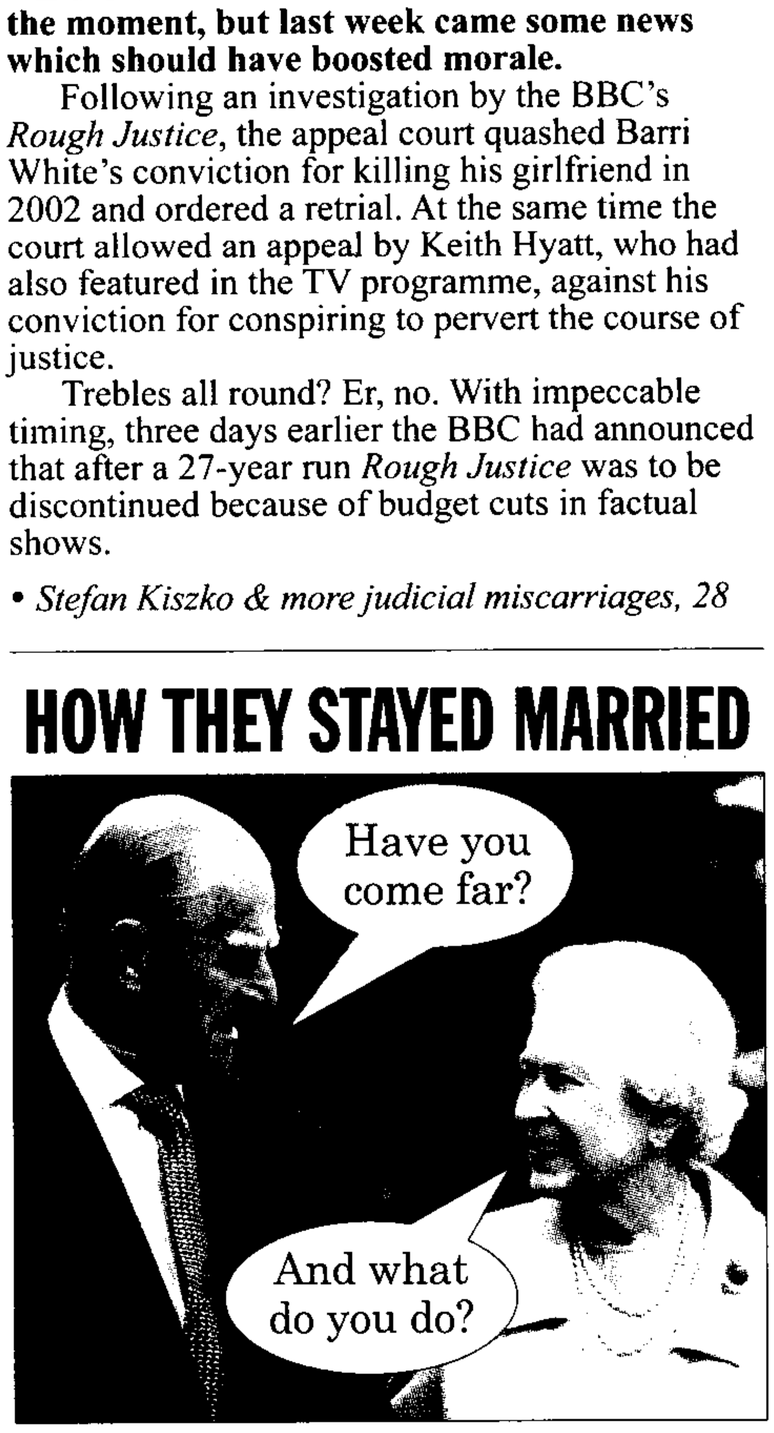
BBC staff haven't much to cheer about at the moment, but last week came some news which should have boosted morale.

Following an investigation by the BBC's *Rough Justice*, the appeal court quashed Barri White's conviction for killing his girlfriend in 2002 and ordered a retrial. At the same time the court allowed an appeal by Keith Hyatt, who had also featured in the TV programme, against his conviction for conspiring to pervert the course of justice.

Trebles all round? Er, no. With impeccable timing, three days earlier the BBC had announced that after a 27-year run *Rough Justice* was to be discontinued because of budget cuts in factual shows.

• *Stefan Kiszko & more judicial miscarriages, 28*

HOW THEY STAYED MARRIED



Street of Shame

IF GORDON BROWN needs an example of the "flexible working" he wishes to encourage, he need look no further than the generosity of the package rolled out by his chum Paul Dacre for new mum Lisa Collins, editor of the *Daily Mail*'s "Femail" pages.

On her return to work two weeks ago, Collins was informed that not only need she do no more Sundays but she can leave the office at 7pm every night – and Associated Newspapers will pick up the bill for a nanny to look after her infant.

Hackettes at Associated have not always been so fortunate. When *Mail on Sunday* feature-writer Fiona Wingett had a baby last year, editor Peter Wright refused to let her work fixed hours and travel less despite a verbal agreement with features editor Sian James during her pregnancy that she could do just that. Wingett eventually accepted a cash settlement after launching an industrial-tribunal case against the *MoS*. Meanwhile, Fiona McPhillips of the *Daily Mail* features desk went to see Dacre towards the end of her maternity leave last summer because she, too, was concerned about her gruelling work schedule – only to be told that she could continue working 12-hour days and Sundays or "fuck off". So she did – to the *Telegraph*.

EXECUTIVES at the *Daily Mail* have confirmed the *Eye*'s suggestion that Paul Dacre is entering "the end game". An announcement that he is to move upstairs is expected any time.

Speculation has been rife for months, but it seems that matters are coming to a head: the editor who wouldn't stay at home even if he was at death's door is now rarely in the office. Two weeks ago the managing editor's office spent most of Friday fielding calls from other papers wanting to know if Dacre had already gone, following yet another week "off sick". (His latest absence was blamed on gastroenteritis.)

Then there's the matter of his appointment by Gordon Brown to review the 30-year secrecy rule – another sign, colleagues say, that he is demob-happy. "He's actually happier now to let [deputy editor] Alistair Sinclair do the editing," says one. "That was never the case in the past."

But the strongest indication yet that Dacre is heading upstairs is the fact that he has started having fishing lessons, apparently in preparation for all those Rothermere-hosted country weekends for which he'll now have time. If he fishes the way he edits, Dacre's angling technique will involve standing on the river bank shouting angrily at the fish to "stop floating around and get on the fucking hook!"

DAVID BLUNKETT's hilarious *Sun* column – worth every penny of the £150,000 it earns him annually – has returned to a favourite theme: the lunacy of opposing ID cards.

"Sometimes I feel the world is going stark, staring bonkers on this issue," he harrumphed last week. "Identity cards will help us get a grip on illegal immigration, stop people defrauding our welfare and health systems as well as making Britain safer from the terrorists…"

One detail was omitted, however: since March this year, the former home secretary has supplemented his earnings from Parliament and the Dirty Digger with a £30,000-a-year job chairing the international advisory committee of Entrust Inc, a Texas-based security company which hopes to provide software for the British ID card system. Although he often holds forth about the joys of ID cards, the dozy fool invariably forgets to declare this interest. Buck up, Beardie!

WHEN news broke that Iain Duncan Smith had recruited Jonathan Aitken to his working party on penal reform, the *Observer* naturally sought the opinion of Peter Preston, who edited the *Grauniad* at the time of Aitken's "sword of truth" libel action.

He was in unforgiving mood. "Jonathan Aitken as adviser on Conservative prisons policy less than a decade after he was put away for the most egregious perjury?" he whinnied. "It's all a bit rich… The redemption road back ought to stop with a hoarse laugh several feet short of Central Office."

True, Aitken is an ex-con (and so may know a thing or two about prisons). Preston, by contrast, is merely an ex-grass: it was he who shopped Foreign Office whistleblower Sarah Tisdall in 1983, earning her a six-month jail sentence, rather than take the rap himself to protect a source. It is indeed "all a bit rich".

TO MARK Pete Doherty's arrival in an addiction clinic last week, the *Daily Mail* ran a spread by one Rachael Lloyd, headlined: "Rehab? It's a Farce."

Rachael knew what she was talking about. In July 2005, after several years as a boozy young hackette, she asked her father if he'd pay for her to go to rehab. "He generously agreed to do so at a cost of £12,000 for six weeks' treatment." But her six weeks at Clouds were a complete waste of her time and daddy's money: "Within two months I went back to drinking." Happily, however, at the end of last year she decided to quit. "I can honestly say I'm a much more balanced and happy person when I'm sober."

Curiously, despite having two pages of the *Mail*, Lloyd couldn't find space to mention that as recently as August this year she was fined £400 for causing "drunken havoc" on an EasyJet plane flying into Bristol airport. The story was covered by *UK Airport News* and several local agencies, but when national tabloids started taking an interest Rachael's ever-generous father made a few calls which ensured that nothing was printed.

Who he? Step forward top PR man and former *Daily Express* editor Sir Nick Lloyd.

RED FACES at the Pink 'Un after *Financial Times* editor Lionel Barber had to publish a long apology to Peter Scott, chairman of the National Gallery. He also axed the hack responsible, septuagenarian arts columnist Anthony Haden-Guest, who alleged among other things that Scott's behaviour had prompted the departure of director Charles Saumarez-Smith.

Since the *FT* has apologised, clearly this allegation about Scott cannot be true. Even so, some hacks were surprised at the scale and intensity of the paper's public grovelling over a piece that scarcely anyone read anyway. Why so much wailing and gnashing of teeth?

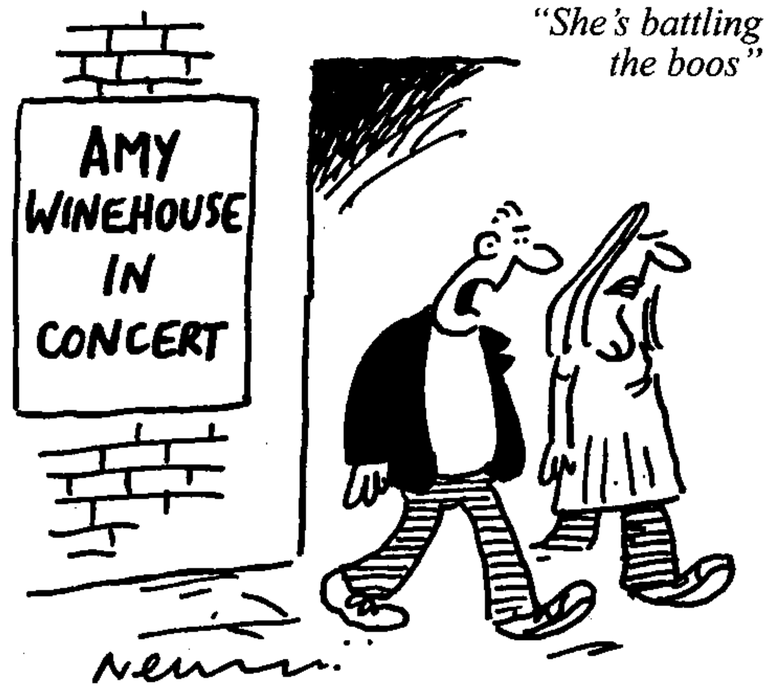
Besides being chairman of the National Gallery, Peter Scott also happens to be a very senior City grandee, the chairman of the Takeover Panel. Might this help explain why the *FT* is so eager to appease him?

"ANYONE who prefers to buy their sourdough bread, dry-cured bacon and marsh samphire at a farmers' market will hate its conclusions," the *Guardian* said of the Competition Commission's report on supermarkets.

Since these sourdough-and-samphire eaters sound like quintessential *Grauniad* readers, no doubt they looked forward to a furious editorial denouncing the report as a whitewash.

Not so. "The commission is right that Britain's supermarkets are competitive," the *Grauniad* commented. "Consumers choose to use them because they make life better. They provide a choice of cheap food in places and at times where it was not available before. Tesco has grown because it has been better at responding to market demand than rivals that have failed."

This must have come as a pleasant surprise to



"She's battling the boos"

Grauniad boss Carolyn McCall – who, besides being chief executive of the Guardian Media Group, is also a non-executive director of Tesco plc.

MUCH gloating at the *Grauniad* ("*Telegraph* takes a hit from redundancies") and the *Times* ("*Telegraph* chalks up near-£10m loss") when their broadsheet rival reported significant losses for 2006/7.

Still, there are some newspaper organisations that would be overjoyed to lose just £10m. In the same period, Guardian News and Media had operating losses of £15.9m, thanks mainly to the *Grauniad*. Meanwhile, Times Newspapers lost a modest £80.7m last year, thanks mainly to the *Times*.

"BRITAIN is in danger of becoming a binge-drinking paradise," a *Sun* editorial thundered last week.

"We all love a bargain. But supermarkets stand accused of cynically slashing prices to lure in youngsters... The supermarkets must face up to their responsibilities. This crazy price-cutting must end."

And how does the Sun face up to its own responsibilities? Just three days earlier it ran no fewer than three pages of advertising from Morrisons promising "Great Christmas times with Morrisons half-price wines", and "Low price beer for Christmas cheer at Morrisons". Bottoms up!

"FAT Cat Row Over Public Sector Pay", the *Sunday Times* announces, working itself into a state of high indignation at the news that salaries for the top 300 executives working for the state have jumped 12.8 percent, with 17 earning more than £500,000.

Such outrage, with an accompanying editorial for good measure, is guaranteed to go down well with Rupert Murdoch. Happily, the *Sunday Times*'s dislike for public sector pay does not stop it publishing a weekly stand-alone Appointments section, packed with executive job ads for top civil servants in Whitehall, county councils and quangos.

TANGLED WEB AWARD

THE Prison Service was thrilled when its website won a Plain English Campaign (PEC) award last year, praised for its "warm and sensitive tone".

The year before it had spent £13,628 on consultancy services from, er, PEC, which is really more a business and had profit of almost £2m last year. The expenditure was uncovered by rival training and editing business, the Plain Language Commission.

It isn't the first time PEC has rewarded a customer. The Department for Work and Pensions paid PEC £124,235 between 2003 and 2006, coincidentally winning its Inside Write award last year. Then minister for constitutional affairs Harriet Harman also won an award for her work on the coroner reform bill; her department paid £35,400 to PEC in the five years to 2006.

Councils and businesses have also won awards after using PEC services. The 2007 gongs are in December – how many customers will win this time?

DISGRACED former *Mirror* editor Piers "Morgan" Moron was in Dubai last week as the keynote speaker at a conference organised by *Arabian Business* newspaper. He was billed, bizarrely, as an "international celebrity".

Arabian Business is published by ITP, a company chaired by Andrew "Brillo Pad" Neill. And who is the title's editorial director and organiser of the conference? Step forward convicted criminal Anil Bhoyrul, Moron's old City Slicker chum from the *Mirror*.

After delivering his speech, Moron gave an interview to local rag *7 Days* about the joys of being a celeb: "We all get treated well, pampered, primadonna'd with our limos. Look at me for God's sake: I landed here, got off the plane and found a white Bentley at the foot of the steps. I'm in the biggest suite I've ever seen in my entire life." Bhoyrul – whose share tips proved so lucrative for Moron – clearly can't kick the habit of finding ways to line his former editor's pockets.

CONGRATULATIONS to *Sun* hack Gordon Smart, who at the age of 27 is following in the footsteps of such journalistic role-models as Piers Morgan and Andy Coulson as the new editor of the *Sun*'s Bizarre pages.

Will he be able to sustain the standards of his predecessor, Victoria Newton (*Eyes passim*)? Certainly, judging by the quality of one of his biggest scoops this year. "DOCTOR WHO TO GET AXE IN 2008" trumpeted a Smart exclusive on 31 May. Needless to say, the BBC's most successful series in years was swiftly re-commissioned until at least 2010.

THE birth of the Rolling Stones is being "recreated in a £5m movie to be shot next year", frothed an excited *Sunday Times* on 11 November.

Rolling Stoned, based on the memoirs of Andrew Loog Oldham, the band's Svengali-type manager, would be directed by Julien Temple and star Mick Jagger's son, James, as his father: " 'If you're trying to examine Mick Jagger, what could be better than someone coded with the Jagger gene,' said Peter Martin, of Surreal Films, who is joint producer of the film with Andrew Melchior."

Alas, Loog Oldham declared he had never met Julien Temple or Peter Martin in a comment on the *Sunday Times* website, nor had he ever "met young Jagger nor proposed to anyone that he play his father". All quotes and details were "pure fabrication", Melchior told the *Eye*. His colleague Peter Martin had indeed spoken to *Sunday Times* arts reporter Olivia Cole the previous week – about a proposed hour-long documentary on Colombia, where Loog Oldham has lived since 1983.

"WHAT now for England?" wailed a half-page ad in the *Sunday Times* for its sister-paper, the *Times*, plugging the daily's coverage of the qualifying rounds of the 2008 European championships.

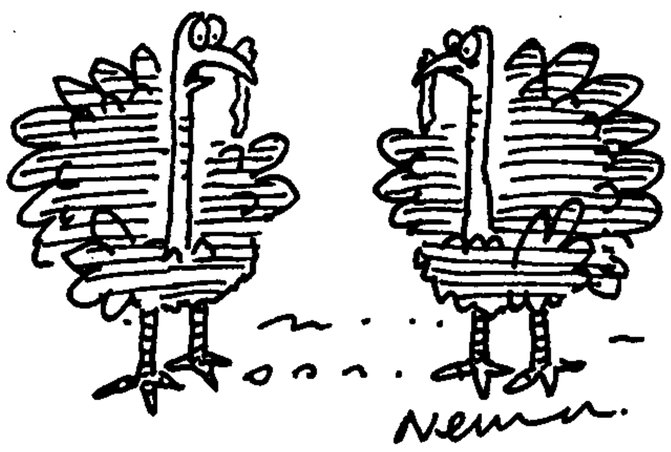
"Russia have booked their passage to Austria and Switzerland. England can now book their summer holidays with confidence. What went wrong and who is to blame?"

Anyone wanting an answer and "the best reports and analysis" should buy Monday's *Times* to find out: "Martin Samuel asks whether Steve McClaren can survive… Gabriele Marcotti has a look at how Euro 2008 is shaping up without England…"

Whoops! The first three pages of the *Sunday Times* sports section were filled with news of Russia's defeat by Israel – which meant McClaren's team might make it to Euro 2008 after all. Yet the half-page ad for the *Times* ("totally dedicated to football") still announced England's elimination.

SUB-EDITORS have had their day, says David "Rommel" Montgomery.

Rommel, now a media baron in central Europe and Scandinavia, tells *Press Gazette* that "sub-editing is a twilight world, checking things you don't really need to check", and described subs as



"I hope we don't get culled before they slaughter us"

a "barrier to communication" between reporters and readers.

Montgomery knows a thing or two about subs impeding communication. His own first job in the twilight world, as a casual downtable sub at the *Sunday Mirror*'s Manchester office in the 1970s, came to an abrupt end when he was caught doctoring copy from Belfast to give it a pro-Unionist spin!

BACK in April, *Daily Mail* investigations editor Sue Reid had a problem.

She knew that foreign visitors who committed traffic offences in Britain were not being penalised because parking and speeding fines cannot be enforced on cars registered overseas – but she needed photos to demonstrate it. What to do? Simple! She set out to entice someone to break the law on the *Mail*'s behalf.

"I am overseeing an investigation into how foreign drivers in Britain are evading fines," she wrote to Peter Traczewski, who lives in Warsaw. "We want to prove it by having a foreign car here with a foreign driver for five days and driving/parking in London, Kent, East Anglia and Portsmouth. We would hide your identity and the number of the car when we publish the piece, which would be lots of pictures of the car in various situations and my story about what we found. Obviously, if you do get a ticket we will pay it immediately. We will pay you £800 and we will pay for you to come over. If you wish to have accommodation in London itself then please do stay at my house in Fulham, London, which has five bedrooms and very central."

Sadly for Traczewski, he was denied his free holiday when Reid emailed to tell him another Polish couple had beaten him to taking up her generous offer. Sadly for Reid, Traczewski is actually a British blogger known as Beatroot, who put full details of her methods up on his blog last month.

Thus far, the *Mail* has failed to print any story about Poles evading parking tickets.

POSTERS for a new weekly freesheet called Shortlist seek to place the men's magazine a cut above grot rags like Zoo or Nuts. The salient difference, they claim, is that Shortlist will not stoop to nudity.

Four shots bludgeon the point home. One shows a birdfeeder without a bird and captions it "No tits"; another has a lone fried egg captioned "No baps", and so on, through melons, puppies and the rest. The strap, echoing Loaded's "For men who should know better" more than a decade ago, is, "For men with more than one thing on their minds".

Curiously the ads neglect to mention Shortlist's provenance. Its editor, Phil Hilton, was formerly editor of Nuts, and worked on the launch of Zoo. Shortlist's publisher Mike Soutar launched Nuts while at IPC, having worked on the breast-heavy FHM; and Shortlist's creative director was lead designer on Zoo.

In other words, pretty much the entire team that inspired low-rent magazine publishing now expects Britain's blokes to follow them upmarket. Men with more than one thing on their minds might find this commercial cynicism hard to swallow.

ORDER OF THE GORDON BROWN NOSE SPECIAL

SO GMTV's Fiona Phillips will not be joining Gordon Brown's "government of all the talents" as a spokeswoman on child poverty or public health after all.

Why not? Because the Treasury could not match the £400,000 she receives from phone-in swindler GMTV, or even the £14,000 she received from commercial sponsors in 2001 to promote premature baby, cancer, meningitis and kidney charities. She has, however, expressed her willingness to "change people's perception of politics... I would love to do a big PR bit for the government."

A study of her *Daily Mirror* columns over the year suggests she has already made a start.

September 2006: "While Tony Blair's speech on Wednesday was brilliant, so, in its way, was Gordon Brown's," gushes Fiona at the Labour party conference. "As a private man, it was a huge thing for him to talk about how his parents shaped the man he is today. Those already acquainted with him know that he possesses the wit, charm, passion, honour and integrity needed to lead the Labour party."

March 2007: "At a lunch 'do' this week, I saw a very entertaining, relaxed, funny man who wowed his audience with jokes and wry observations. His name was... Gordon Brown," squeals Fiona. "Most people in the room were surprised. Those already familiar with the chancellor's warm personality know there's plenty more where that came from."

May: "Following Gordon Brown's appearance on the GMTV sofa with me on Monday morning, some commentators went overboard, trotting out a load of old garbage about how Gordon wanted to 'create a new, softer image'," scoffs Fi. "For a start, as relatives of Kate and Gerry McCann found out when they witnessed his eyes fill with tears at their plight, he is already a caring, compassionate man. And he has been appearing on the GMTV sofa for the past ten years because he wants to talk to voters, not because he wants to enhance his image."

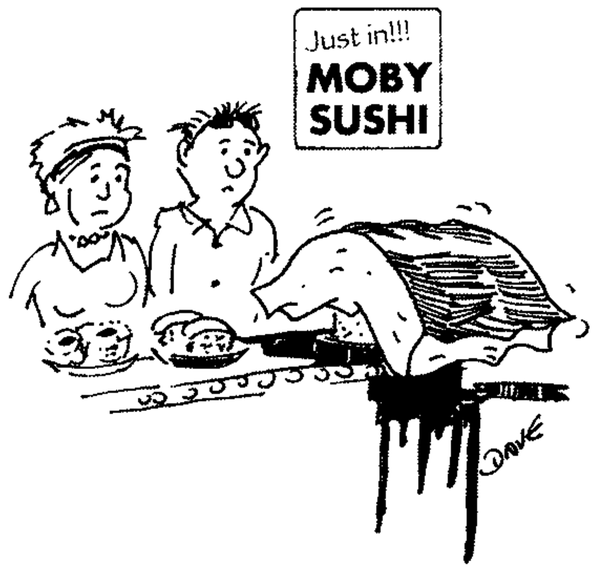
June: Fiona breaks off from sobbing over the departure of Tony Blair – "he's really good-looking in real life" – to praise the new PM for his choice of cabinet ministers. "Girl power is back! And not just because the Spice Girls say so. Gordon Brown's announcement of a whole slew of intelligent, powerful women in his cabinet is a clear message that women can, and do, achieve at the highest level." And yet not Fiona. One of the great missed opportunities of politics.

THE ZZZ LIST

An occasional column of utterly pathetic non-stories. Readers' contributions welcomed...

"YOU might have noticed Madonna has been looking younger and younger lately - but carrying a school lunchbox is surely taking her desire to stay youthful to the extreme. The lunchbox had daughter Lourdes's family nickname Lola Leon written on the side."

– Victoria Newton, Sun, 13 November



HOME Secretary Jacqui Smith's announcement that the Trusted Borders consortium will be biometrically screening all UK visitors in a £650m contract shows that Britain is keen to follow the US techno approach to homeland security. But that's not necessarily good news.

The consortium is led by Raytheon and includes Accenture; and a consortium led by Accenture and including Raytheon already runs US-VISIT, the American programme for biometrically screening people entering the US.

The US General Accounting Office has criticised management costs and spending increases on US VISIT, especially as the programme is unable to offer its main proposed innovation: it cannot tell when people who entered the US finally leave.

Smith's announcement is of course good news for Serco, a member of the Trusted Borders consortium. The firm's chief executive Christopher Hyman said: "Serco's role reflects the depth of our home affairs expertise." It may also reflect the fact that Labour's Lord Filkin is a non-executive director of Serco (Home Affairs) plc, while Labour's Baroness Margaret Ford sits on Serco's main board.

WHEN financier Clive Cowdery bought billions of pounds of mis-sold life insurance policies in 2004, he told MPs his Resolution group would offer "dedication, experience and patience" when running the closed UK life funds.

Cowdery is now selling up (to former pizza magnate Hugh Osmond), personally trousering an estimated £150m for his three and half years' "patience and dedication".

And the policy holders? Labour MP Paul Flynn has tabled an early-day motion complaining of the "atrociously poor returns on the £95bn invested in closed zombie funds" while savers "remain trapped into the funds by swingeing exit charges of up to 20 percent".

"THE PFI model now has a strong intellectual pedigree," boasted a *State of the Market 2007* report from Partnerships UK (PUK), the government's privatised PFI taskforce. So what is the pedigree?

Well, topping the rankings of PFI financial advisers is PwC, which since April 2004 has acted on projects worth £7.55bn. The "independent" report cited to justify PFI was written in 2001 by… PwC. And PFI policy has been controlled by a Treasury private finance unit under Richard Abadie, a partner on secondment from… PwC.

PFI's value for money is established by adjustments for things like "optimism bias", which tend to favour it. The current fiddle factors emerged in a 2002 report by Mott Macdonald. And guess which firm comes out as lead "technical adviser" on PFI? Yep, Mott MacDonald!

AT THE end of last month Rhodri Morgan announced "preferred bidders" for three new wind farms in Wales. Or rather he didn't. The leader of the Welsh Assembly government said there were three "preferred bidders", but would not name the firms.

Why the shyness? Possibly because one of the preferred bidders, Airtricity, has former Energy Minister Brian Wilson chairing its UK operations. Dublin-based Airtricity has been deeply disappointed by Ireland's failure to back its wind farms and is desperate for British business to make up the shortfall. Wilson is central to this, and Morgan has given his Labour party associate a big opportunity in Wales.

Airtricity has been selected to build a 100-megawatt wind farm at "area D", near Aberystwyth, a project that will attract hundreds of thousands of pounds of "renewables" subsidies. However, some local environmentalists and campaigners are not impressed. When Wilson was energy minister, he approved an enormous wind farm at Cefn Croes without a public inquiry. After the wind farm was built, local campaigners complained that the deep foundations for the turbines had churned up massive amounts of peat bog, releasing large amounts of CO_2 – undermining claimed positive effects on global warming. The latest Welsh wind farms are all planned on Forestry Commission land, so they will remove trees, as well as challenging environmentally sensitive hillsides. However, all these concerns may count for little. Because of the size of the development, current Energy Minister Malcolm Wicks will decide on planning permission. The last person to hold Wicks job was of course… Brian Wilson.

CALLED TO ORDURE

KEITH VAZ's first big session in charge of the Commons home affairs select committee, was, as we might have expected from the oily old fox, a much-hyped affair. It drew a good crowd as the committee was looking at the government's macho desire to extend the 28-day limit on detention without charge.

Witnesses included not only the Sloane Rangerish governor of Belmarsh prison, Claudia Sturt, but also Mohammed Abulkahar and Abul Koyair, two London Muslims arrested in the infamous Forest Gate raid of June 2006 and later released without charge. They arrived wearing superb Trollopian beards and expressions of faint befuddlement.

So: juicy witnesses, a packed house, preening MPs. But despite all this excitement, little was learned from the session. The governor proved too shrewd to say anything untoward. As for Abulkahar and Koyair, they were so overwhelmed they could barely utter more than a couple of coherent sentences.

It was certainly a publicity coup to get these two blokes to give evidence. But publicity for the issue? Or publicity for Keith Vaz? Listening to their faltering evidence – Koyair was particularly monosyllabic – it was hard not to feel sorry for the two men.

Tory MPs addressed them, so over-elaborately that it sounded patronising, as "gentlemen". Repeatedly an MP asked an extremely long question, only for Koyair or Abdulkahar to reply "yeah" or "nah". The MPs started to run short of ammo. As for the witnesses, they looked thoroughly miserable and nervous. Was being shot at by the Metropolitan Police not bad enough? Did they really have to be subjected to this ordeal, too?

Governor Sturt was straight out of *Bad Girls: The Musical*. Posh voice, high heels, signet ring on little finger of the left hand. She was also impressive. When MPs asked questions she launched immediately into informative, brisk, grammatically perfect replies.

Vaz asked her if she had any views about extending the 28-day limit. Sturt hit the ball straight back, saying it was not her duty to "form a view about the wisdom or otherwise of a government policy". It was simply her job to detain people who were properly placed in her custody.

Someone asked how much Belmarsh spent on interpreters for terror suspects. Sturt, without blinking, replied: "A third of a million pounds last year." Not a small amount, is it? Another MP asked if there were race riots at Belmarsh. Sturt: "Certainly not! We have occasionally had a punch-up."

Martin Salter, a distinctly illiberal Labour MP from Reading West, tried to start a punch-up of his own. Salter was keen to help his party whips in their case for longer detention times. He questioned Sturt and her Prison Service director Phil Wheatley about the cost of transporting category A terror suspects to and from court appearances. Why couldn't they use privatised firms for this job? "Wot is the reason?" demanded Salter, thinking he might have stumbled on to some job protection racket.

Wheatley, not quite managing to disguise what he thought of Salter, patiently explained that category A prisoners had to be transported with police escorts. That required special driving experience. It would cost a fortune to train all the private sector drivers. Salter, himself a former lorry driver, shut up.

David Davies (Con, Monmouth), an unsubtle right-winger, weighed in to accuse Sturt of "letting people out of prison five times a day to pray".

Sturt did her best not to laugh. "I do not understand the question," she said. It turned out that Davies meant "let people out of their cells", not "prison". Ah. Same difference!

Sturt: "We do not regard a Muslim praying five times a day as a sign of extremism."

Wheatley also pointed out that "there is nothing improper in a Muslim prisoner praying." Davies wrinkled his nose and looked unimpressed. Crushed, too.

'Gavel Basher'

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

EFFORTS to teach children to swim are being hampered by the falling number of swimming pools, according to Ofsted inspectors.

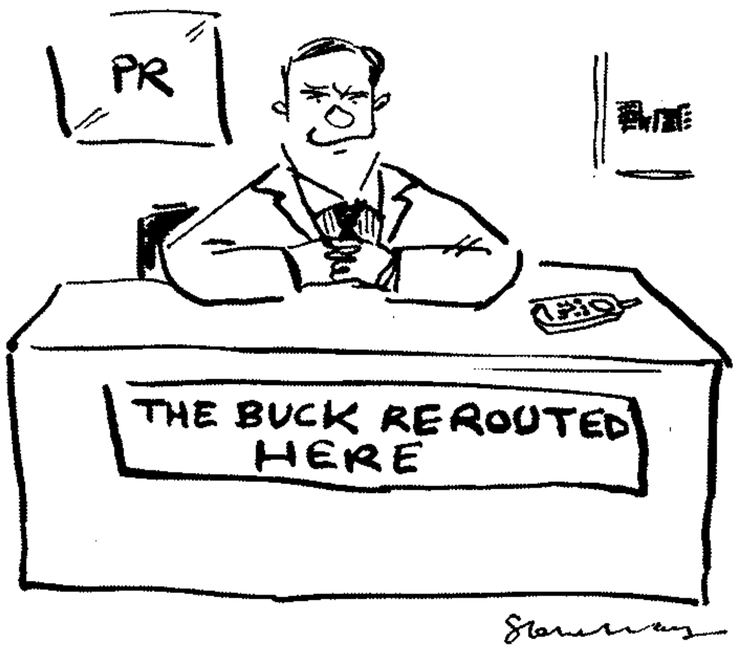
Ofsted's new report says schools' efforts to ensure every 11-year-old can swim 25m are mostly good, but that many schools struggle to find the time for lessons – especially since travelling to and from swimming pools takes so long.

Ofsted studied swimming lessons in 17 different areas of England. In three areas pupils spent more than twice as long getting to the pool as they spent in the water because swimming pools had been "centralised" (ie smaller local pools had shut). "In some cases, pupils spent 70 minutes travelling for just 30 minutes of swimming," says the report.

WHEN former Home Office minister Keith Bradley, now Lord Bradley, resigned as a governor of Parrs Wood secondary school in South Manchester last month, few eyebrows were raised. Bradley said commitments in the Lords restricted the time he had available for school matters.

Just a week later, however, Ofsted recommended that Parrs Wood, which numbers Lord Bradley's daughter among its pupils, be taken into special measures. "The leadership and management are inadequate," said Ofsted. "There is confusion, inconsistency and a lack of accountability."

No doubt His Lordship's departure was pure coincidence.



BRUSSELS SPROUTS

NO SURPRISE that the European court of auditors has refused to sign off the EU's 2006 accounts (for the 13th year in a row). But the refusal comes hot on the heels of another telling court judgment – that of the EU's civil service tribunal on the European commission's former chief accountant, Marta Andreasen (*Eyes passim ad nauseam*).

Andreasen was suspended from, then booted out of, the commission after she publicly criticised the EU's accounting systems as having more holes than a big chunk of Emmental. She was fired, in effect, for bringing her employer into disrepute. The tribunal agreed with this, saying that by going to the press rather than staying in-house, Andreasen had not followed proper whistle-blowing channels. In their euphemistic words, "the general interests of the community" were more important than her "right to freedom of speech".

Never mind that Andreasen only went public because nothing was done internally when she warned officials of the widespread risk of fraud and corruption. The judges saw fit to accuse her of disloyalty to her colleagues, and said she had "knowingly acted in disregard of... staff regulation".

The tribunal's ruling does nothing to address the substance of Andreasen's concerns, which the latest auditors' report supports, five years after she raised them. The normal procedure during the annual EU accounts circus is for the commission to blame member states for irregularities. But, say the auditors, the commission's own systems "are not sufficiently effective in mitigating the risk of error over most of the budget".

One glaring gap occurs when the commission claws back funds that have been misspent by member states. The commission "does not provide complete and accurate information in the accounts, or elsewhere, on the recoveries made", the court of auditors says – a considerable blind spot in which fraud could thrive.

But fear not. The commission launched an action plan to fix things last year (Andreasen's accusations surfaced in 2002). But even this has an "optimistic" timetable, according to the court. In the meantime, the commission's accounts will remain "chronically sordid" – a comment not from Andreasen but Jules Muis, former head of the commission's own internal audit service.

EU-phemisms

The auditors have failed our accounts for the 13th year in a row

ISLAMAPHONEY

"ONE of the most startling findings of this report is that in one typical week in 2006, over 90 percent of the articles that referred to Islam and Muslims were negative," announced London mayor Ken Livingstone last week at the press launch of *The Search for Common Ground*, the study he commissioned into the media's portrayal of Islam. "The overall picture presented by the media is that Islam is profoundly different from and a threat to the west."

And what happened during the particular "typical" week – 8 to 14 May 2006 – which the team chose to concentrate upon?

The high court ruled that nine Afghan asylum seekers who had hijacked a plane to Britain would be allowed to stay in the UK. The government's "narrative report" on the 7/7 terrorist attacks, and the Intelligence and Security Committee's report on why they were not prevented, were released. Attorney General Lord Goldsmith called publicly for Guantanamo Bay to be closed for the first time.

President Ahmadinejad of Iran wrote a defiant personal letter to George Bush following a draft UN resolution threatening "further action" over his country's nuclear programme. The UN called for a ceasefire in Somalia after it was revealed Islamists there controlled 80 percent of the capital, and more than 30 people were killed in a single day by suicide bombers in Iraq.

Did the researchers think these events might in any way have skewed their results? They did not. "The week in question may not have been normal in terms of the number of items counted," the report conceded. "It was, however, normal in the sense that it showed what people in Britain think is normal – Islam is a threat."

CANCERS linked to drinking and smoking are rising rapidly, new figures show.

Other forms of the disease connected with obesity and exposure to the Sun are also on the increase, it is claimed. *Metro*

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELDS

A CHILDREN's holidays charity is set to sell a playing field and large house in a mid-Sussex village for a small fortune, even though it was supposed to hold the land in trust for young people.

Stafford House and its adjacent playing field in Hassocks were given to the county council to benefit youth "as an addition to the amenities of the locality" in 1944 by Edward Stafford. The site was later placed in a charitable trust, which by 2000 was struggling to afford the upkeep on the property, so it agreed that the London-based Children's Country Holiday Fund (CCHF) should take over the trusteeship, believing that would ensure that the site continued to benefit young people as intended.

CCHF, which used the house for residential stays for disadvantaged children and also rented it out for educational trips, didn't pay a penny to acquire the property, but seven years on it has announced plans to sell. Locals estimate that the site, in a prime spot for commuters, could sell to developers for £5m. CCHF says the accommodation is now out of date and that selling Stafford House will let it buy somewhere more suitable.

The Charity Commission told local people it cannot step in to prevent the charity's activities being relocated and that the trustees have the power to sell "any part of the charity's land or property which is no longer required". So much for Mr Stafford's generous gift lasting "for ever hereafter" as stated in the original deed.

The move also bodes ill for the cabinet office's community assets programme. Councils are being encouraged to sell under-used community facilities to charities and community groups for as little a £1, with improvement grants of up to £1m available from the Community Assets Fund. But as Stafford House shows, charities buying land or buildings from the taxpayer for next to nothing can sell them off for a whopping profit.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

20mph Speed limit London mayor Ken Livingstone wishes to enforce across capital to reduce accidents

11.8mph Average speed of traffic in London

Down on the Farm

THE recent report from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds made particularly interesting reading for Robin Page, the vociferous farmer and passionate naturalist who runs the Countryside Restoration Trust.

When the trust was launched, its aim was to buy farmland in East Anglia which had been denuded of wildlife by modern farming methods, and see it managed in such a way that the trees, flowers, birds, butterflies and animals returned. Page was therefore struck by the fact that although the RSPB was mourning drastic declines in bird populations around the Norfolk Broads, there seemed to be one exception: the RSPB's reserve at Berney Marshes.

While the number of snipe has fallen elsewhere by 94 percent, redshank by 32 percent and lapwings by 35 percent, Berney Marshes has reported a striking recovery: redshank up by 500 percent; lapwings up from 12 pairs to 47. Curiously, the RSPB offered no explanation. As a particular fan of lapwings, Page investigated.

Mark Smart, the RSPB's warden at Berney Marshes, was only too happy to reveal his secret. Not only has he been careful to create the right habitat for his birds, he has also rigorously controlled predators which had previously been decimating their numbers.

In the first year he shot 40 foxes. He has shot any crows he sees on the land. And he has cut down trees which used to provide cover for other predatory intruders such as magpies and sparrowhawks. The results, as the figures show, have been dramatic. But why is the RSPB so coy about publicising the secret of Mr Smart's success in reversing the rush towards extinction which it is constantly bewailing elsewhere?

It seems the RSPB is reluctant to admit that, to save some species of birds, it may sometimes be necessary to reduce the numbers of others (let alone all those cuddly little foxes so loved by the RSPB's largely urban membership).

The truth is that Britain's countryside is only the way it is thanks to the activities of man, and to keep any kind of balance in wildlife populations it is often necessary for man to intervene. One of the most destructive of all predators on birds is the badger, and one of the consequences of the runaway explosion in the badger population since culling was banned in the 1980s (apart from the bovine TB epidemic devastating the dairy industry) has been a further massive decline in the number of ground-nesting birds.

Another, as Defra is privately aware, has been a similar collapse in our hedgehog population. Hedgehogs and badgers are competitors and, since badgers are bigger and stronger, there is nothing they like more than a few baby hedgehogs for dinner.

One problem giving the RSPB a particular headache has been the severe decline on Salisbury Plain in the number of ground-nesting stone curlews, now one of our rarest birds. The RSPB is keenly aware that the cause of this disaster has been the explosion in the local badger population. But, given its members' affection for Mr Brock, the last thing the RSPB is prepared to do is publicly admit it.

'Muckspreader'

NUMBER CRUNCHING

3 Major livestock diseases which have struck Britain this year

£300m Government plans to slash from Defra budget anyway

TV

The Blair Years (BBC1)

THE last *Eye* entertainingly reported the distress of *Observer* editor Roger Alton that his paper had failed to secure a valedictory interview from Tony Blair despite "spending 10 years with your head rammed up the guy's arse".

But now it's clear why Alton's tactic failed. There were other heads much further up the PM's behind, belonging to David Aaronovich and the boys from Juniper productions, who are now rewarded for their cramped endurance with a three-part series called **The Blair Years**, in which, according to the script, "Tony Blair gives the first full inside account of his time inside Number 10."

Well, up to a point, Lord Falconer. On the programme itself, Blair refuses to talk about any of his rows with Gordon Brown ("It's not helpful when he's sitting there doing the job now") and either he's done an off-screen deal to leave out numerous other interesting topics or Aaronovich and Juniper understood from their long colonic irrigation with the Blair camp that they weren't supposed to ask. Anyway, there's nothing at all about David Kelly, Bristol flats, Mandelson resignations, Euan getting pissed in public or any of the other family issues that made the Blair administration unlike any others.

The smart money says that Blair's lucrative deal with Random House for his memoirs prevents him from spilling the really interesting beans at this stage and so *The Blair Years* is stuck with exhaustive interrogation of now irrelevant points. Did Tony really, seven years ago, rewrite the NHS budget on the *Frost Programme* without telling Gordon in advance? Was there an error in translation over a comment made by Jacques Chirac during the build up to the Iraq war? None of this now matters but they are the only matters Blair is prepared to discuss.

So the whole thing reeks of making the best of a bad deal. What the BBC really wanted was their very own *Frost-Nixon* with Paxman or Humphrys harrying the fallen leader until rivers of mascara and pancake ran down his made-up cheeks. But Paxo and Humph haven't spent the last decade cheerleading for New Labour and the Iraq war in newspaper columns in the way that Aaronovich has and so it was to the latter Blair agreed to speak.

Aware that this is only one better than having the ex-premier quizzed by Alastair Campbell, BBC guidelines have required Juniper to pad it out with balancing contributions from opponents; but Brown said no and so there is rather more of Iain Duncan Smith and the former German foreign minister than human flesh can easily stand.

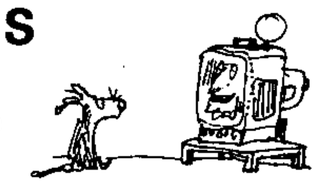
Lord Birt, Aaronivich's mentor, pops up in the first episode almost as often as Blair. Matthew McFadyen reads the commentary with moody authority but the sentences are so dull and non-committal that they can only have been written by committees of BBC policy advisers.

The giveaway is that Aaronovich seems to have interviewed Blair in at least three different locations – Number 10, Connaught Square, an office somewhere – and yet there are only small portions of each conversation, sometimes cut together in the same sequence. Presumably that's because he never said very much in any of them but, once it was clear that was the case, and that Brown wouldn't talk about him and he wouldn't talk about Brown, the project should have been abandoned as a bad loss and they should have waited for the book for which Blair's clearly keeping the best stuff.

After the Crowngate affair, BBC "Head of Vision" Jana Bennett let it be known that BBC documentaries on controversial topics had better be as dull and worthy as possible for a while. Juniper – run by Bennett's hubby, Richard Clemmow – has certainly achieved that ambition with this one.

'Remote Controller'

MEDIA NEWS



"IT APPEARS to be little more than a silly-season stunt," we noted in August, when West Midlands Police lodged formal complaints with Ofcom about the C4 documentary *Undercover Mosque*. And so it has proved. This week, after a thorough investigation, Ofcom dismissed all the complaints.

Now perhaps the spotlight will turn on the vexatious complainants. For, as we also noted, although it was a silly-season stunt it was quite an effective one, widely reported by newspapers hungry for tales of TV fakery. And the press release issued by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service in August fed this appetite by accusing the programme-makers, HardCash Productions, of deliberate deception.

It quoted Bethan David, a CPS lawyer, who said the film "completely distorted what the speakers were saying" by quoting them out of context. She was backed up by Anil Patani, who rejoices in the title "assistant chief constable (security and cohesion)" for West Midlands police.

When challenged by the *Eye*, both David and Patani refused to provide a shred of evidence to support this serious (and defamatory) allegation. And no wonder: as Ofcom confirmed this week, there was none.

The documentary showed prominent speakers from certain mosques denouncing all non-Muslims as "filthy", "accursed" and "criminals" only because this was, er, what they had indeed said. After exhaustive study of untransmitted footage, Ofcom found "no evidence that the broadcaster had misled the audience… the broadcaster had accurately represented the material it gathered".

This is a damning verdict for ACC Patani and the wretched Bethan David of the CPS, who have not only made wholly false allegations against the film-makers but also wasted Ofcom's time and money. Will they resign? Either way, they may yet find themselves sued for libel by both HardCash Productions and Channel 4.

UNION reps at the BBC are being given more details about the effect of the proposed cuts on current affairs output. More programmes will have to be made "with less ambition attached to them".

That means more live studio "two-ways" and fewer "built" documentaries. Consequently series like the award-winning *Five Live Report*, will be replaced by reporters "talking through" stories during live phone-ins, kicking in a few clips along the way.

Current affairs will lose slots on both BBC1 and BBC2 in the early evenings and after the *10 O'Clock News*. *Panorama* will have to justify its peak time slot with higher ratings, requiring more consumer driven stories, more studio "debates" and much less "built" material.

The objective is to be able to claim that the BBC continues to produce just as much current affairs and that programmes are more interactive, inclusive and "relevant" to dwindling audiences.

NEWS of the latest cyclone to hit Bangladesh has finally reached the 48 BBC staff currently on a month-long voyage by chartered cruiser to discover "how a heating planet is changing people's lives" in the permanently flooded country.

The studio managers, caterers, health and safety officers, World Service Trust teams, reporters, presenters, producers, bloggers and policemen "crammed" on to the boat are all contributing to a spectacular carbon footprint that is linked to chaotic weather patterns and rising tides.

One hack onboard reports: "Life may be more basic than we're used to: no power showers or washing machines. But we have enough money, food, shelter and drinking water, and that's more than many people here."

AD NAUSEAM

IT SHOULDN'T have required the Advertising Standards Authority to tell punters that a recent Shell ad, with flowers bubbling out of refinery chimneys, was misleading.

If the image could be excused by creative licence, the copy could not: "We use our waste CO_2 to grow flowers." Unsurprisingly, the ASA said this was tosh.

But greenballs are becoming a serious problem in advertising. Companies hope a well-turned phrase or endemic public guilt will let them get away with nonsense. In a speech to the Advertising Association in May, Richard Lambert, director-general of the CBI, warned that unless advertisers act responsibly they can expect more intervention, citing bans on tobacco and junk food advertising.

Yet Shell's ad, coming on the back of misleading green claims from Tesco, Lexus, Volkswagen, Citroen, the Scottish & Southern Energy Group and the "100 percent renewable" Good Energy Ltd among others, show that adland has heeded the ticking-off in its usual manner: two fingers and more sloganeering.

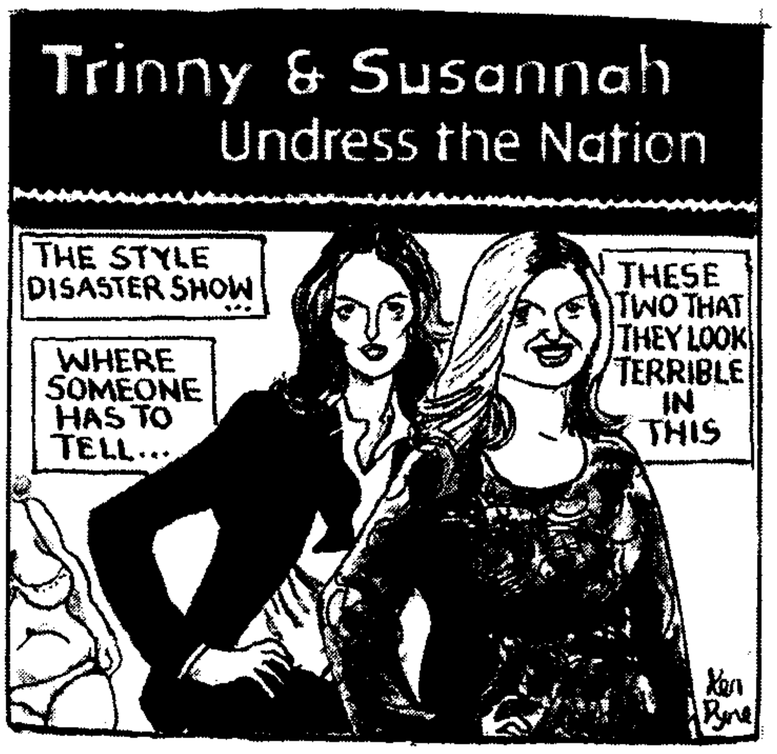
LUVVIES

"I feel that in my life there are only ten letters that represent my total vocabulary and they are all in a language that others somehow don't understand."

SEAN PENN
Metro

Submitted by Ali Catterall.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.


Trinny & Susannah
Undress the Nation
THE STYLE DISASTER SHOW...
WHERE SOMEONE HAS TO TELL...
THESE TWO THAT THEY LOOK TERRIBLE IN THIS
Ken Pyne

MODESTY BLAZE

● "I'd love there to be a God. He'd like me. We'd be mates. I am a deeply moral person but I'm not moral because I'm thinking I'm going to get a place in heaven. I just am."

– **Ricky Gervais, *The Word*.**

DUMB BRITAIN

TalkSport Radio

Mike Parry: How many leaves are there on a four-leaf clover?

Contestant: Three.

BBC Radio 2

Ken Bruce: Name that group. There are three of them in it.

Contestant: Was it the Four Tops?

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: What elite fighting force did Sir David Stirling found in 1941?

Contestant: The Liberal Democrats.

Radio Clyde Breakfast Show

George Bowie: What famous detective features in the Agatha Christie novel The Hound of the Baskervilles?

Contestant: Is it Harry Potter?

JUST FANCY THAT

WHEN lottery operator Camelot withdrew its Cool Cash scratchcard because players didn't understand negative numbers a new low was achieved in Dumb Britain.

Many thanks to the numerous *Eye* readers who spotted this reaction from a 23-year-old angry scratchcard buyer in the *Manchester Evening News*:

"On one of my cards it said I had to find temperatures lower than -8. The numbers I uncovered were -6 and -7 so I thought I had won, and so did the woman in the shop. But when she scanned the card the machine said I hadn't.

"I phoned Camelot and they fobbed me off with some story that -6 is higher – not lower – than -8 but I'm not having it."

SCREEN NOTES

RUM goings on at *Halliwell's Film Guide*, the movie "bible" founded by the critic Leslie Halliwell.

When Halliwell died in 1989, publisher HarperCollins appointed John Walker to take over, and he continued as editor for 16 years. However, the 23rd edition, published last month, does not feature Walker's name. Or rather, it does, but only if you peel away one of the stickers on the cover, spine or inside title page to read the message: "Edited by David Gritten and John Walker." What's going on?

When Walker retired due to ill-health last year, HarperCollins MD Amanda Ridout objected to the contract which granted him a continuing royalty for his material in the book – well over a third of its more than 23,000 entries – and demanded he accept a reduced rate, extending for just five years. Walker suggested the company buy out his copyright, but HarperCollins declined.

Eight months of legal wrangling later, it agreed to stop claiming that Walker had "co-edited" around 250 new entries written by new editor David Gritten, and attach stickers to that effect on 30,000 copies which had already been printed.

LEGAL NEWS

WHATEVER happened to John Sweeney's book about Wayne Rooney, *Roo Unzipped*?

"We just want to move it to a different slot in our schedule," Random House told the *Independent* in mid-August, when it was due for publication. "We don't know when that will be yet but should do next week." The publisher flatly denied that it had been pulled for any "legal reasons".

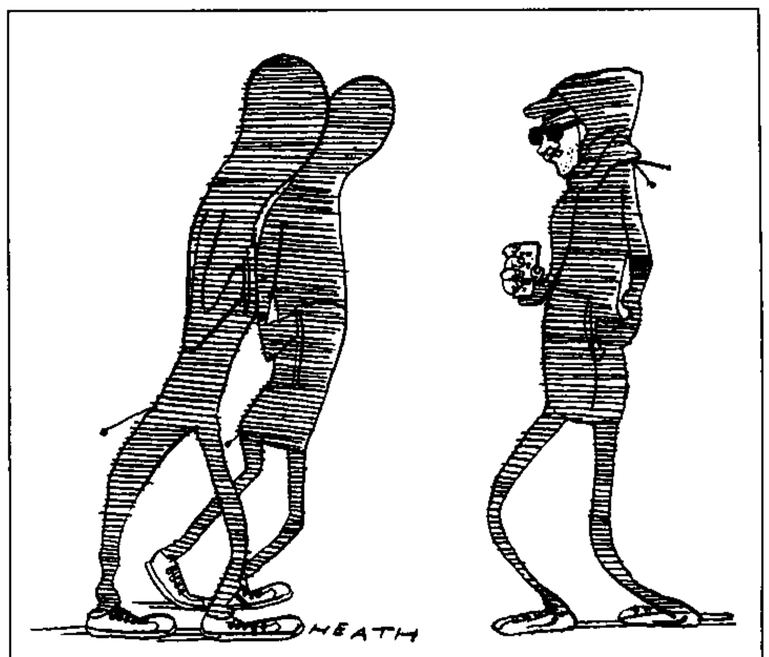
The truth is rather different. In the weeks before the publication date, lawyers for the spud-faced nipper and his agent, Paul Stretford of Proactive Sports, contacted supermarket chains warning of dire consequences if they stocked the book. The stores took fright and cancelled their orders. Random House, which had hoped for a supermarket bestseller, promptly lost interest. Now it is demanding that Sweeney repay his entire advance.

It's hard to see what grounds Random House has for this. The author fulfilled his contractual requirements – delivering the typescript, making changes requested by the editor and having it passed by the lawyers. Random House complains that he put them at "material risk", yet until the last-minute retreat it seemed happy enough with the book, promising explosive revelations about "unsavoury characters" who had attached themselves to Rooney during his rise to the top.

Although Rooney was muttering about invasion of privacy, it was the threats from Paul Stretford that provoked most panic. The *Eye* has some experience of Stretford and his lawyers: five years ago they wrote to us to complain "in the strongest possible terms" about an article which, they claimed, was "a very serious libel". They suggested we pay £50,000 in damages to Stretford and his company. Lord Gnome refused, and the threatened writ never materialised.

Will some other publisher now take on *Roo Unzipped*? It could hardly be more topical. Early next year, after lengthy legal delays, Paul Stretford will appear before a Football Association disciplinary committee charged with breaching the rules governing agents. The FA brought the charges after the famous "blackmail trial" of 2004, in which Rooney's previous agent, John Hyland, was accused of demanding money with menaces from Stretford. The trial collapsed when the Crown Prosecution Service announced that it had found documents showing that Stretford – its star witness – had given false evidence to the court.

If found guilty at next year's FA hearings, Stretford faces an unlimited fine and the revoking of his agent's licence.



"He's a role model for me, he only nicks iphones"

WORLD OF HYPE

THIS IS a big week for private-equity firms, as they publish their new voluntary code promising more "transparency" and "disclosure". And a very big week indeed for Simon Walker, the new chief executive of the British Private Equity and Venture Capital Association, who has been spinning like a whirling dervish.

Walker joined this month from Reuters with a brief to "revamp the image" of private equity. So who is he?

After a stint in New Zealand in the 1980s, where he attempted unsuccessfully to become a Labour politician, Walker returned to Britain and worked as a PR man in the City – whence in March 1996 he was seconded to the Conservative Party, to advise John Major on how to win the next general election.

Despite his contribution to the Tories' worst drubbing in living memory, in 1998 he wangled himself a job as communications director of British Airways, where he presided over a succession of PR disasters (including the notorious tail-fin fiasco) while savaging anyone who dared question the genius of chief executive Bob Ayling. In March 2000, when the *Observer* reported that Ayling was on the way out, Walker went ballistic: "Ludicrous, laughable, totally untrue..." Ayling was sacked the next day.

Walker soon departed as well – only to be recruited by Buckingham Palace, where he was soon in the soup again. When the Countess of Wessex was hoodwinked by the *News of the Screws*'s fake sheikh, Walker had a great idea: if the paper would go easy on the tapes, he'd give them an exclusive interview with Sophie. It duly appeared under the headline: "My Husband Is Not Gay." Spin-doctoring at its finest!

Walker also made it on to the A-list of Tory candidates last year. Showing a keener instinct for self-preservation than the private-equity boys, however, local Tory associations have unanimously rejected him.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

LIZ TAYLOR LAUNCHES JEWELLERY COLLECTION:
A WEDDING RING IS THE MOST SACRED ITEM OF JEWELLERY YOU'LL EVER BUY!
LIZ'S JEWELS
AFTER ALL, YOU ONLY GET MARRIED A COUPLE OF TIMES A YEAR!
LIZ'S JEWELS

MEDICINE BALLS

Denying the dying, Pt. 2

"WHAT's the point of giving millions to cancer charities and spending billions on developing new drugs, often in the UK, if the NHS won't pay for them?"

So asks Graham Smith, whose junior doctor son Ollie died from metastatic colon cancer at the age of 29 and was denied the drug Avastin (bevacizumab) by Harrow PCT. The PCT was following guidance from the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), which in January 2007 decided Avastin did not represent a good enough use of NHS funds.

Strange, then, that it should be available across Europe and America. Avastin is a genetically-engineered version of a mouse antibody that contains both human and mouse components. It is believed to work by inhibiting a protein that stimulates new blood vessels, thus denying the blood, oxygen and nutrients needed for tumour growth.

It is not a cure for metastatic cancer, but it got its Food and Drug Administration licence in America in 2004 for use alongside chemotherapy because it "has been proven to delay tumor growth and more importantly, significantly extend the lives of patients". This may only be by a matter of months, but it can also extend the disease-free survival and so patients and relatives may be spared some of the relentless decline of metastatic cancer which transformed Ollie from "a handsome fit young man to a grotesquely deformed blind and crippled old man in 12 weeks".

Expensive as Avastin is (£2,500 per infusion), drug costs constitute a very small fraction of the overall cost to the NHS of treating cancer, with most resources spent in the last few months of life. If a drug keeps a patient out of hospital for longer, it could easily justify its cost.

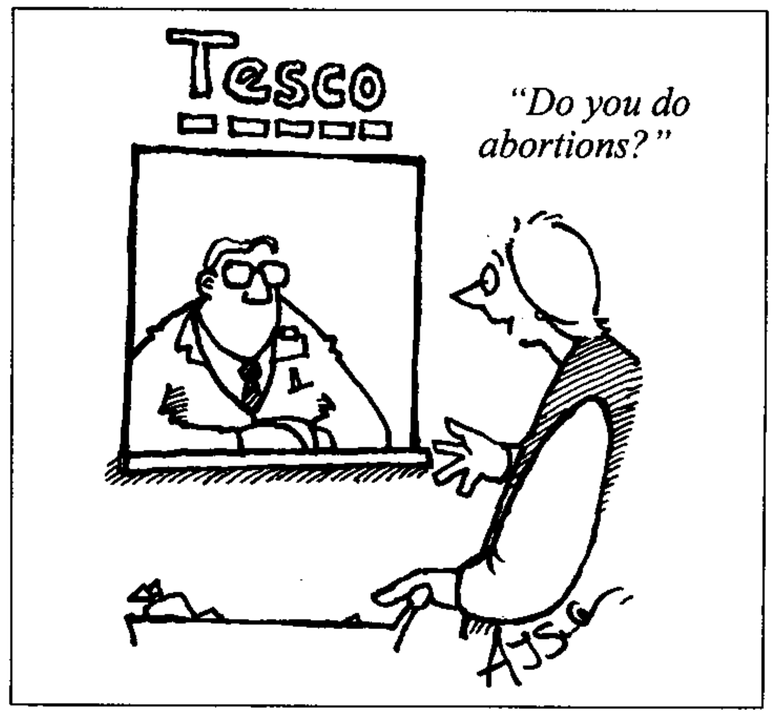
Roche, which manufactures the drug with Genentech, also make Herceptin and have a licence for Avastin in metastatic lung and breast cancer. Trials are ongoing to see if the drug works in early stage cancers, where it has a better chance of cure, and the results are likely to lead to another lengthy bout of NICE deliberation (see *Eye* 1185). Roche has thus far played hardball with the price, arguing that it took more than 30 years of research to find a monoclonal antibody able to delay tumour growth. It also believes the drug is worth the money, and that sufficient individuals and insurers will fork out, even if the NHS doesn't.

In May this year, the influential (and independent) Karolinska Institute in Sweden found that the "excessive bureaucracy" involved in approving drugs for use (or not) in the NHS was one reason for our higher death rates. However, other European countries are looking at the NICE model as a way of containing their own drug costs and many also adopt its guidance.

All of which puts doctors in a difficult position. According to his father, Ollie's oncologist strongly recommended the use of Avastin in his treatment and thought the NHS would provide it. It was unanimously denied by the PCT initially and on appeal because of "the duty to balance the needs of the individual with the needs of the wider population". Had Ollie decided to take to the streets *a la Herceptin* ("young, handsome junior doctor who has given life to caring for the sick denied vital cancer drug"), he would doubtless have got it. Colon cancer in someone so young is rare, and its detection was doubtless delayed because of the long hours and hectic lifestyle of a trainee surgeon. Two doctors advised him he had irritable bowel syndrome.

Ollie's only demand was for his parents to reunite so he could die at home. His father remains incredulous that he was denied a licensed treatment, available in most other European countries. Living a few more months with a better quality of life doesn't sound like much until you try without. (Conflict of interest: M.D. has been paid to chair conferences for NICE and Roche. His views remain somewhere between the two.)

M.D.



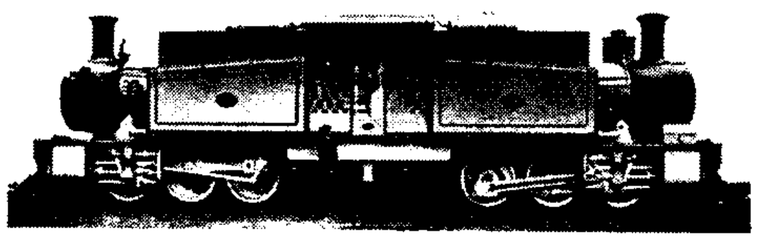
SICK NOTES £££

AS THE NHS's National Programme for IT approaches its fifth birthday (two years older than it should have been at completion) with little to show but costs of around £3bn, details have finally emerged of where all the money has gone.

The *Eye* has obtained a breakdown of spending by the central body in charge, Connecting for Health (CfH), in 2006/07. It shows that while hospital consultants hate the programme, those of the management variety must love it.

The big winners include: **ASE Consulting**, which was brought in for the disastrous procurement process but stuck around to earn £16.4m last year; **Atos Consulting**, trousering £8.1m (on top of £47m for IT systems including the lamentable "choose and book" system); **CapGemini**, £7.5m; **Kellogg Brown Root**, £7.2m; and a host of others picking up a couple of million – not to mention the PR consultants who have bagged more than £5m on the programme so far.

Most eye-catching of all is the £14.7m paid in one year to **Deloitte**. It was brought in to manage the programme in 2006 by CfH boss Richard Granger, formerly of... Deloitte.



SIGNAL FAILURES

Oiling the wheels

NO WONDER transport policy in Britain is stuffed when officials plan for the future using energy price predictions from a parallel universe – predictions like crude oil falling to $20 a barrel by 2010.

In the real world oil almost hit $100 a barrel this month, pushing UK petrol above the £1-a-litre average for the first time. Yet as recently as February last year (shortly before crude broke the $75-a-barrel barrier), the then Transport Minister Karen Buck kept a straight face while explaining to a Commons select committee how her department's National Transport Model (NTM) did its planning using fuel prices based on crude oil price projections from the Department for Trade (RIP).

"Their latest projections are for crude oil to fall from its current high levels to $35, in 2004 prices, in 2010 and then remain at that level in real terms through to 2020, the end of their projection." In fact $35 was the DTI's medium projection, the maximum being $50 and the minimum $20.

The National Transport Model, which was published in 2003, is used to predict travel behaviour. Its oil price forecasts may appear ridiculous, but they help Labour pursue twin policies of "predict and provide" for roads and airports while stifling investment in more energy-efficient alternatives like electric railways and tramways.

Bypasses and road widenings can appear unavoidable when the NTM shows how road traffic will grow as fuel prices fall (a fat chance) and people become even more reluctant to swap their cars for public transport.

Meanwhile the government forecasts just 22.5 percent more rail passengers over the next seven years, and will even choke demand for that by allowing just 10 percent more carriages (*Eye* 1190). In the world of £1-a-litre petrol, however, Network Rail says the government's plans fall short by hundreds of carriages and train companies predict 40 percent growth.

The mandarins behind the NTM also produced this year's rail white paper, ostensibly the basis of a 30-year strategy. It admits: "Electric trains are more energy-efficient than diesel ones." But electrifying more tracks means spending money and losing tax revenue on oil-derived fuels, so the white paper sweeps electrification under the carpet (the case for it "is not made yet").

Electric trams, which cut congestion and air pollution in cities worldwide, aren't even mentioned. But in that strange parallel world where oil prices are predicted to tumble dramatically, Labour has blocked new English tram systems because the benefits don't outweigh the costs.

RAIL passengers in trouble might expect that pushing a button on an "emergency help point" would get them through to, well, emergency services. No chance, as travellers at Taplow station near Reading have discovered.

When a local resident wanted to find out whether services were running to the unstaffed station as her train hadn't arrived, she found to her surprise that the red emergency button put her straight through to National Rail Enquiries in, er, India – who had never heard of Taplow. She asked to be put through to First Great Western who run the trains but was told that she could only be referred to ticket sales.

A local rail users' group which tried to investigate further was told that in the case of an emergency, the call-centre staff have instructions to put the caller through to the emergency services. National Rail Enquiries staff are not trained to deal with emergencies, but are supposed to put calls through to a 24-hour emergency service of the train operator concerned. But since they have no idea where Taplow is...

FIRSTGROUP boss Moir Lockhead is horrified by the thought that taxpayers who fund his buses might gain democratic control over them.

A proposal in the local transport bill could put an end to the current bus free for all by giving councils the power to replace failing operators with franchises. Lockhead is not impressed. "Money to improve public transport would just be absorbed in bureaucracy," he moaned as he unveiled WorstGroup's results for a half-year in which its Bristol bus service was so poor a public inquiry was held and two of its rail franchises came bottom in the official passenger satisfaction survey.

In that period FirstGroup made £48m profit on its UK buses (up 21 percent on last year) and £48m on its trains (up 10 percent). Oddly Lockhead had no complaint about public money that could have improved transport being "absorbed" in profits.

'Dr B Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

FOLK OFF

BACK in August we reported how the Standards Board for England, the multi-million pound watchdog meant to keep an eye on councillors' ethics, had let off a BNP councillor in Bradford who tried to bribe voters by sending them Christmas cards containing £5 notes (*Eye* 1190).

Cllr Paul Cromie, the SBE ruled, was in the clear because he had once been told by a council officer that he didn't need to declare donations to "worthy causes".

Now the SBE is to take no further action against Colin Auty, a BNP councillor who sang a racist "folk song" outside the constituency office of Dewsbury's Labour MP Shahid Malik, and Derek Dawson, a BNP councillor from Burnley, who filmed the "performance" for the BNP's website.

Malik's staff said they felt intimidated and feared for their safety as Auty sang four verses of doggerel which alleged that, apart from mosques, kebabs and curry houses, the Asian community in Dewsbury had introduced drug dealing and paedophilia.

Both councillors were accused of bringing their respective authorities "into disrepute", but the SBE's "ethical standards officer" ruled that this had not been the case because, er, "Cllr Auty was not acting in his official capacity or performing his functions as a councillor when he sang outside Mr Malik's office". M'learned friends call this the "Ken defence", as it was successfully employed last year to get the London mayor off an SBE complaint over his "Nazi concentration camp guard" insults to a young Jewish reporter.

OVER AND OUT

ANOTHER setback for Newham mayor Sir Robin Wales's "private police force", the parks constabulary fondly known to locals as the Keystone Kops (*Eyes passim*).

The Keystones - untrained park keepers who strut the streets of the borough in second-hand police uniforms – were very proud recently to have been issued with proper Metropolitan police radios. Sadly one "officer" couldn't resist showing his off down the pub. While this may have impressed his mates, it did not impress Inspector Knacker, who has taken the radios back. The Keystones are having to make do with their old council sets instead.

Meanwhile local shopkeepers have complained about bullying visits from uniformed Keystones. One pharmacist, when unable to produce paperwork relating to his business waste contract on demand, was issued with a "stop and search" order by Wales's storm troopers.

After the *Eye* inquired of Newham council last week whether it was true that some Labour councillors have applied to become part-time volunteer Keystones (the answer was "not that we are aware of"), Keystone managers told the "constables" that they'd all be fired if any more stories about the parks constabulary appeared in the *Eye*.

This is unlikely. The Keystones, like other PCSOs (police community support officers) elsewhere, are needed to fulfil the government's aim of putting as many uniforms on the streets as possible, in order to fool the public into thinking that there are more bobbies on the beat, without having to recruit more genuine cops. And with the government likely to impose a 2 percent pay deal on the police next year (Knacker wants 4 percent), the Keystones and other cardboard coppers will continue to play a vital, if largely fictional, role.

● **SUNDERMEAD estate in Lewisham has recently been rebuilt, with most existing homes demolished and new roads laid out. One of very few original features surviving is an ancient mulberry tree, possibly planted long ago as part of a failed scheme to breed silk worms for local silk mills. For decades it has been the only sizeable tree in the area and a local landmark. The mulberry tree now stands at the corner of a brand new road. So, in keeping with the tradition of naming streets after local landmarks, there was only one name for it...**

CLEVELAND WAY

WHEN the chief executive of Redcar and Cleveland council, Colin Moore, stepped down in September, the council's director of finance, Ray Richardson, became acting chief exec.

But it appears that the councillors who approved Richardson's appointment had not seen an Audit Commission "financial management report" on R&C council delivered in September 2006. It described a "council at risk of not meeting the minimum standard for financial management", £813,000 of unanticipated overspending, and a host of "consistency issues", ie officers telling some councillors one thing and others another. The report also noted that Richardson "failed to publish a medium term financial plan" – a basic requirement. Curiously the report never appeared on the council website, nor that of the commission.

Richardson told the *Eye* the report was "an early draft version... which contained inaccuracies". Unfortunately that statement itself has some "consistency issues".

Richardson is well aware that the report was not an early draft because he called upon the commission to withdraw it after publication himself. Indeed he could hardly be less well-qualified to comment on the earlier drafts because, as the commission confirms, Richardson "had not responded" to its emails about the drafts - with the result that they reported the council's budget reserves incorrectly.

Pointing to this error, Richardson convinced the commission to replace the report with a softer version. What he could not convince them to remove was the criticism that councillors had not seen the medium-term financial plan.

Oddly enough, council minutes clearly state that members *were* informed about the plan at a council meeting months earlier. So what really happened?

One possibility is that the Audit Commission made repeated and substantial errors. Another is that, er, someone doctored the minutes. R&C council has form in this area. In 2005, an officer in the strategic policy and research department complained that there were occasions when senior officers "asked that additional minutes be added, even when there is no record of the issue or action ever having been discussed".

Richardson claims the "draft" report seen by the *Eye* has been "circulated in bad faith in order to unjustly damage the reputation of Redcar and Cleveland Borough council". Readers will be able to decide for themselves from Friday, when both versions of the report will be available on our website. Go to www.private-eye.co.uk and click "Rotten Boroughs".

PLYMOUTH HO, HO, HO

RESIDENTS of Plymouth were deprived last month of what had promised to be an entertaining employment tribunal after Tory council leader Vivien Pengelly's former political assistant, Naomi Fox-Smith, received a large but undisclosed settlement to prevent her pursuing claims of unfair dismissal and sexual discrimination against her old boss.

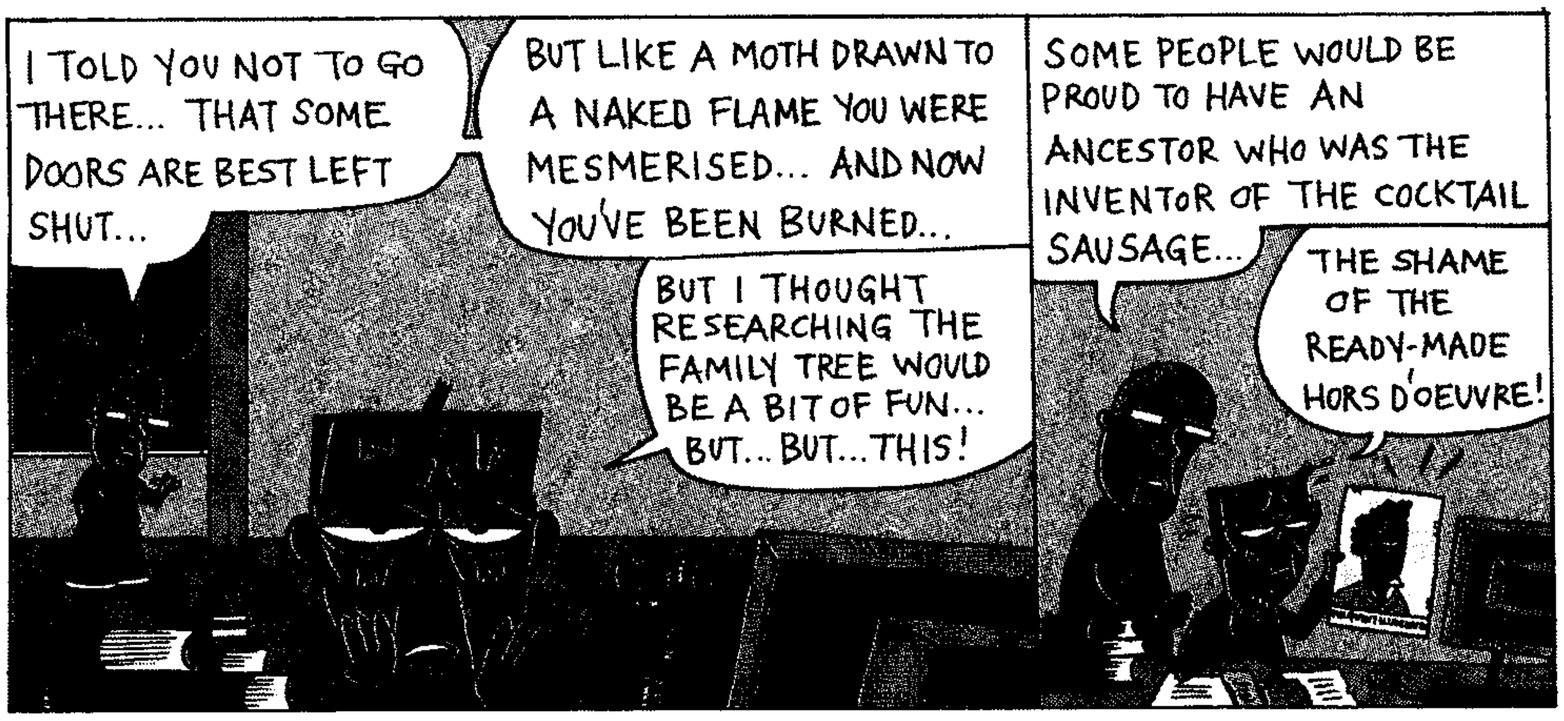
On Fox-Smith's first day of work in June 2005, Pengelly allegedly told her she wished her predecessor, James Holtim, had not left, as he had run personal errands for her such as picking up her laundry. Pengelly told Fox-Smith she had only got the job as she was "the best of a bad bunch". Shortly after this Fox-Smith received a bizarre phone call from Conservative Party HQ querying her membership, apparently because Pengelly had alleged her new assistant might be a "Lib-Dem spy". Pengelly also told Fox-Smith she shouldn't join a trade union and couldn't be part of the council's flexi-time scheme. Attending the Conservative party annual conference was a no-no because "it was full of old men and not suitable for a young lady".

Pengelly allegedly regularly made offensive personal comments about fellow local Tories: Cllr X was mentally ill, Cllr Y was a paedo, Cllr Z was HIV positive and so on. And South West Devon's Tory MP, Gary Streeter, couldn't be trusted as he had been, in a former life, a member of the SDP.

Alas the city council is refusing to say how much buying Fox-Smith's silence has cost the taxpayers of Plymouth. The taxpayers, meanwhile, may think they should be told.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

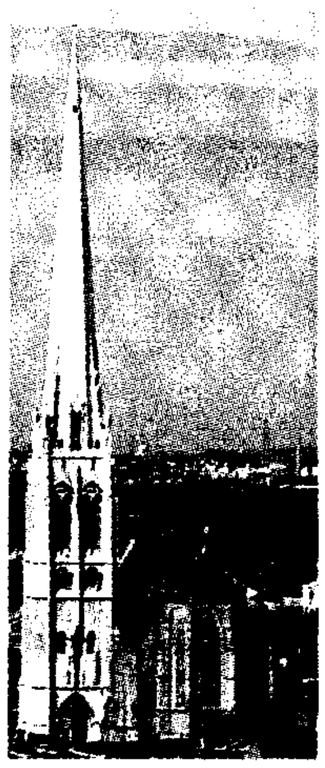

I TOLD YOU NOT TO GO THERE... THAT SOME DOORS ARE BEST LEFT SHUT...
BUT LIKE A MOTH DRAWN TO A NAKED FLAME YOU WERE MESMERISED... AND NOW YOU'VE BEEN BURNED...
BUT I THOUGHT RESEARCHING THE FAMILY TREE WOULD BE A BIT OF FUN... BUT... BUT... THIS!
SOME PEOPLE WOULD BE PROUD TO HAVE AN ANCESTOR WHO WAS THE INVENTOR OF THE COCKTAIL SAUSAGE...
THE SHAME OF THE READY-MADE HORS D'OEUVRE!

● **SO FAREWELL, then, Cllr Paul Baichoo, who has resigned from Southwark council for "health reasons", triggering a by-election in his Riverside ward. Baichoo, who was something of a protégé of local MP Simon Hughes, is yet another prominent Southwark Lib-Dem to earn a living from smut. "Glamour photographer" Baichoo runs a website featuring scantily clad lovelies and admits having worked as a male escort in the past. Earlier this year the *Eye* revealed that Hughes's website was formerly run by Beyond Ego, a company owned by Lib-Dem activists Karl Lindon and Martin Hoscik. Lindon, who is currently serving a jail sentence for paedo-porn offences, and Hoscik also owned UnabashedHosting, a cheesy web company for the lapdancing and mucky book trade (*Eyes* 1187 & 1188). These Lib Dems, eh?**

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE principal "vertical feature" in the skyline of Preston, Lancs, is the towering thin spire of St Walburge's Roman Catholic church. Rising to 310ft, it is said to be the third tallest in the country.

Dramatically sited between the West Coast mainline and the branch to Blackpool, St Walburge's is a dramatic landmark on the railway journey north to Scotland.



Dedicated to a saintly Saxon princess, it was built between 1850 and 1873 – and was paid for, not by a rich benefactor but by the pennies of the working people of Preston.

The architect was Joseph Aloysius Hansom (incidentally the inventor of the Hansom Cab) and Pevsner found his creation "alarmingly individual… a building driven to extremes outside and inside". Inside, the church is 66ft wide and a single space without aisles, all covered by a fantastic elaborate timber hammer-beam roof. "As you enter," wrote Sir Nikolaus in the *Buildings of England*, "nothing has prepared you for the shock of this interior".

You might suppose that so extraordinary and dominant a building – one which has often been proposed for cathedral status – would be cherished by its owners. But no: St Walburge's is proposed for closure – one of as many as 10 churches in Preston proposed for the chop under the diocese of Lancaster's "Fit for Mission" review headed by Canon Aidan Turner.

With that unerring aesthetic sense that characterises cost-cutting bishops and bureaucrats in both the Roman and Anglican churches, St Walburge's is the top of the list of distinguished buildings the diocese finds surplus to requirements – or unable to afford to maintain. Several have gone already, including St Augustine's, Preston, which was a magnificent 19th century Italianate basilica.

Of course with falling congregations, the diocese has financial problems and St Walburge's is big – very big (even if rather well planned for the new post-Vatican II liturgy). But what will it say about the Roman Catholic church in its traditional Lancashire heartland that it can abandon the most prominent and magnificent church in Preston?

Sixteen years ago, St Walburge's was closed after the discovery of dry rot, but then repaired and restored. Was that a waste of money? Besides, it is close to what is now called The University of Central Lancashire: surely it could serve as a student Catholic centre as well as being a parish church? As it is listed grade I, the diocese cannot just demolish Hansom's masterpiece; but if it is closed – without any alternative scheme for its future – it will soon deteriorate and become vandalised.

In recent years there have been grounds for hope that the Roman Catholic Church in England is becoming less Philistine and brutal. Christopher Martin's new book, *A Glimpse of Heaven* – a long-overdue celebration of Roman Catholic churches in England and Wales in which St Walburge's figures prominently – was actually published by the patrimony committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference as well as by English Heritage. That St Walburge's can be seriously proposed for closure makes one despair.

ALSO on the Victorian Society's list of the Top Ten Endangered Buildings in England and Wales is the Moseley Road (or Balsall Heath) Baths in Birmingham, an Edwardian building containing two swimming pools, listed grade II*. It is still in use, but essential repairs are estimated at £30m.

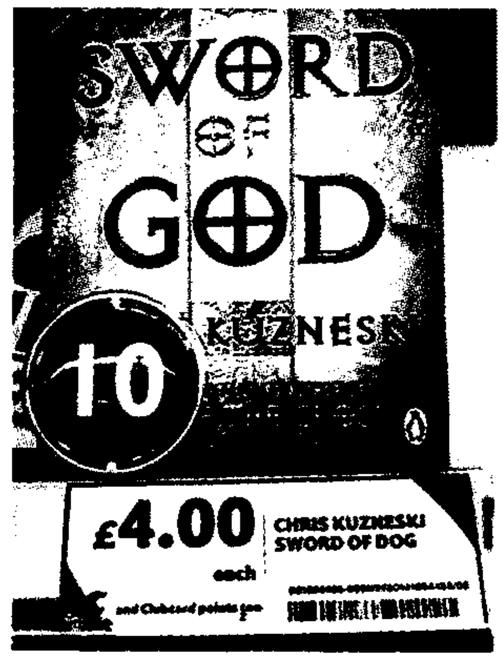
Billions can be found, of course, to spend on extravagant facilities in Hackney for the wretched Olympic Games which will only be used for a couple of months and have no serious future, while all over Britain local councils struggle to find the money to maintain swimming pools that swimmers want and need.

But the most shocking entry on the list is probably Shadwell Park in Norfolk. The seat of the Buxton brewing family, it was altered in the 1840s by that boring architect Edward Blore and then, in the following decade, spectacularly enlarged by that wildest of wild Gothic men, Samuel Sanders Teulon. The result is one of the most extraordinary and inventive examples of High Victorian Gothic.

The last person to live in this country house was Sir John Musker, the banker and racehorse breeder, who died in 1992. Since then the estate has been owned by someone who seems to have bought it solely for the grounds and race-horse stud. The house itself has not been lived in or looked after. Today it is riddled with dry rot and no longer weatherproof and is on Norfolk county council's Buildings at Risk Register, but Mr C.W. Kennard of the Shadwell Estate Co declines to cooperate or comment on this disgraceful situation. Both the council and English Heritage have tried to negotiate with the owner but to no avail.

And the new owner of Shadwell Park? Why, it's Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid al Maktoum, the younger brother of the Crown Prince of Dubai, who also happens to be Minister of Finance and Industry back home so presumably has more than two pennies to rub together. Surely he will not tolerate the deliberate neglect a grade I listed building? Watch this space.

'Piloti'



I-SPY

Tesco, Milton Keynes

Submitted by Steve Cobham.

£10 paid for similar submissions.

(SAE required for return of photographs)

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

SEVEN months after CDs by a small-time pianist called Joan Hatto were discovered to be recordings of other pianists repackaged by her husband, those implicated in the grubby affair have somehow wriggled off the hook.

Through a combination of luck, PR and brazenness, the *Gramophone* magazine, which was duped into publishing praise for Hatto up to and beyond the point where the truth came out, tweaked the story to its advantage. In a frantic round of media slots, the *Gramophone's* editor, instead of hanging his head in shame, congratulated himself for breaking news of the fraud. Not a shining example of editorial integrity.

Then there are the critics who were duped, not least the *Gramophone's* Bryce Morrison, who eulogised Hatto's release of Rachmaninov's 3rd Piano Concerto in a feature for *Intelligent Life* magazine as "among the finest on record", while condemning a Yefim Bronfman recording as feeble. As we now know, the Hatto release and the Bronfman recording are one and the same, which leaves Morrison distinctly egg-faced – if still refusing to admit it and fall on his sword.

Then again, why should he when the chief culprit, Hatto's husband, has so far got off scot-free? He was interrogated by Trading Standards and the police, but exploited the fact that details at the time were muddled. He also successfully presented himself as a sad figure who stood to make little money from what he did and was driven simply by love for his late wife.

Actually, he *did* stand to make a lot of money. Thanks to *Gramophone* et al, sales of Hatto's discs were doing well. As her husband now claims to have destroyed over 18,000 of Hatto's unsold CDs "so far", he was clearly operating on a sizeable scale, anticipating returns of £250,000.

If such things are allowed to be swept under the carpet, it doesn't say much for the record industry – still less for music criticism.

ON A HAPPIER note the funeral of Ursula Vaughan Williams, much-loved widow of the composer, was one of those occasions when the music world scrubs up nicely: a warm send-off for a woman who led a blessed life and chose to leave it encased in a basket-woven eco-coffin, which looked rather like a picnic hamper on the way to Glyndebourne.

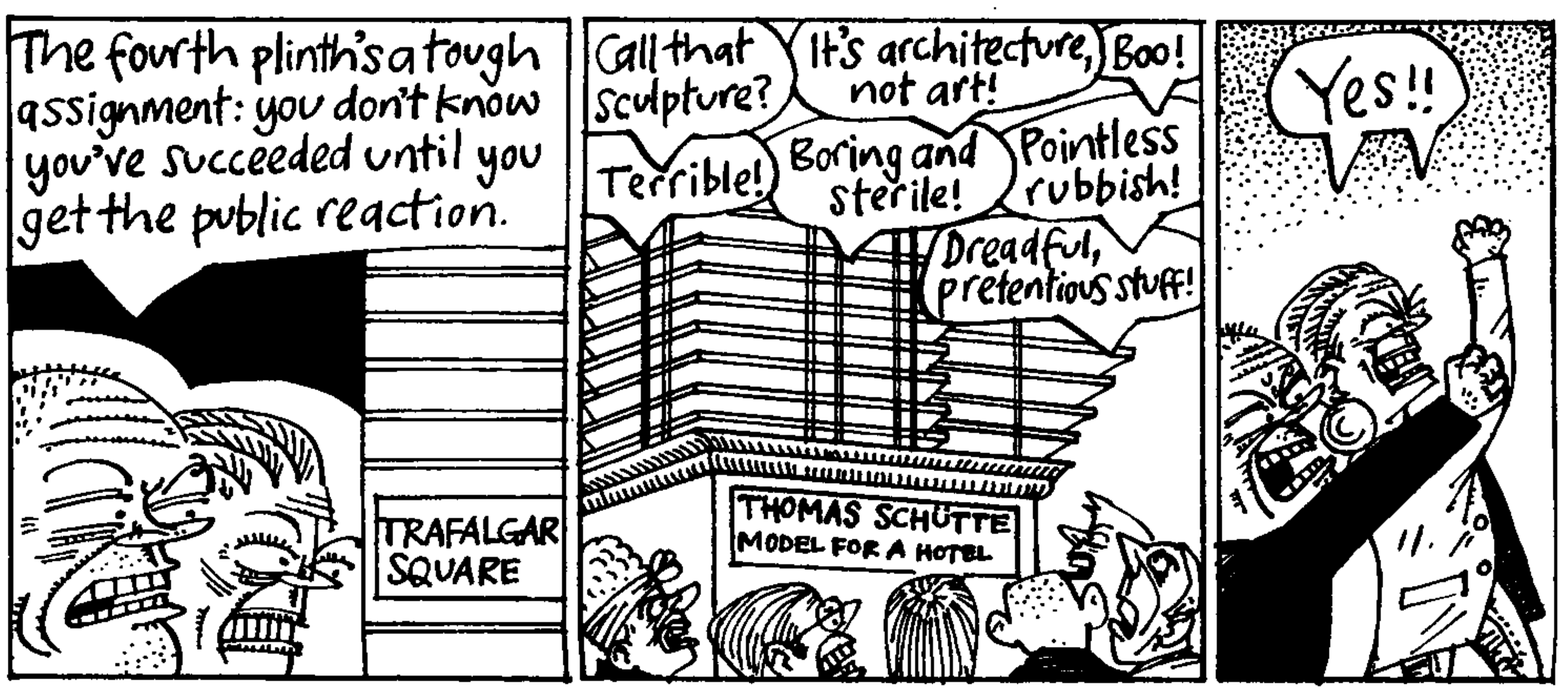
Blessed, too, with a robust sense of humour, she would have enjoyed the fact that she was going to the crematorium on bonfire night.

Whether she'd have been quite so keen to have her funeral followed by a party in the Long Room at Lords, I doubt; if one thing bored her more than religion, it was cricket. She'd certainly have laughed, though, at the ensuing awkwardness when guests were invited to view the ashes. Quite apart from surprise at their being ready so soon, there was consternation that Ursula's still smouldering remains might not be a joy to look at. People edged toward the door – until they realised the ashes were, in fact, the Ashes. Well, not everybody's sporting.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH



Letters

Beyond our ken

Sir,

Ken Livingstone ("Mayor culpa?" Letters, 1197) is right that the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chief Rabbi are not "supporters of homosexual rights", but has anyone ever heard one of them even briefly entertaining the thought that gay people should be executed? Dr Qaradawi's suggestion that cruel punishments might be needed for homosexuality to keep Islam "clean of perverted elements" were reported, not by MEMRI (Middle East Media Research Institute), but by Qaradawi's own website.

Why did Livingstone spend public money whitewashing this man's politics, and why does he continue to defend him?

BRETT LOCK,

London.

Lesser of two evils

Sir,

Although Boris Johnson overwhelmingly won the contest to be selected as Conservative candidate for mayor of London, many party members were less than convinced as to his suitability. While undoubtedly an amiable and capable person, Boris's predilection for buffoonery could be considered a liability at a time when the public are crying out for a serious committed politician of substance to deal with London's many challenges.

However, having read Ken Livingstone's repulsive diatribe in your esteemed organ (Eye 1197), it is clear that this odious little cunt must be removed from power, and Boris Johnson is the only candidate capable of beating him. Love him or loathe him, at least Boris has the decency to apologise when he offends someone.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID MILLER,

Via email.

Waste of space

Sir,

With reference to Nick Serpell's rant against BBC management, this is exactly what we BBC engineers have been saying about BBC journalists for the last 40 years.

Shame on you for not devoting a whole issue to their incompetent, over-paid, wasteful, illiterate and ignorant ways.

We had a saying – "Know bugger all about anything? Become a BBC journalist".

Yours expectantly,
RICHARD CROWLEY,

Ludlow, Shropshire.

"Centre of gravity of her bag shifted"

BBC repeats?

Sir,

There are television organizations other than the BBC, you know! Eye 1196's two television pages featured no less than nine articles (all about the Beeb), three Dumb Britain quotes (all from the Beeb), a TV review of a BBC programme, a cartoon (about the Beeb), a Going Live (about BBC News 24), a Birtspeak from a BBC controller (although I admit that one's unsurprising) and a Number Crunching (about the Beeb). Your extract from a TV Guide didn't explicitly say so, but I'm pretty certain Animal Park is shown on, er, the Beeb. Variety is clearly not the spice of life at Chateau Strobes. I would cancel my subscription, but I'd rather keep it – even though the issue in question turned up on my doorstep two weeks late. I was beginning to get withdrawal symptoms.

Yours pedantically,
GILES BENNETT,

Via email.

"Must dash... I want to spend some time on my social-networking websites"

One fat Auntie

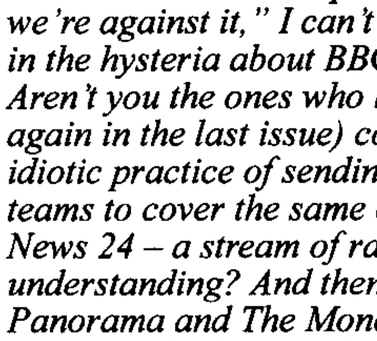
Sir,

Other than on the principle "Whatever it is, we're against it," I can't understand your joining in the hysteria about BBC news budget cuts. Aren't you the ones who have repeatedly (and again in the last issue) complained about the idiotic practice of sending several different news teams to cover the same event? Do we really need News 24 – a stream of raw data unleavened by understanding? And then there are series like Panorama and The Money Programme, becoming increasingly dumb and pointless. All right, they should leave Newsnight alone, but otherwise there is plenty of scope for cuts.

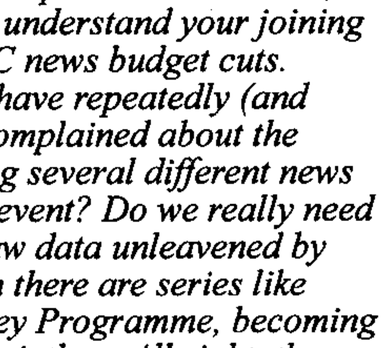
Yours,
PATRICK HANLEY,

Warrington.

Lookalike



von Hagens



Boycott

Sir,

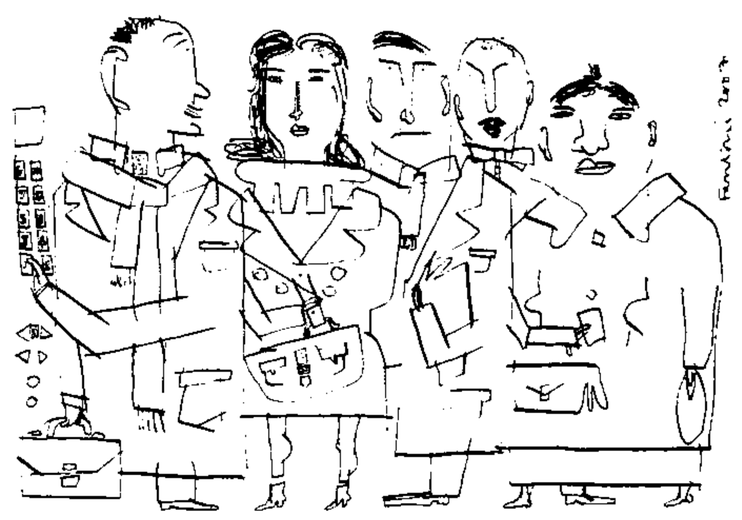
On switching on the TV the other day I was alarmed to see the controversial TV autopsy presenter Dr Gunther von Hagens ruminating over the entrails of another poor England cricket performance.

Could Dr Death and "Sir" Geoffrey Boycott perchance be related?

Yours etc,
IAN SAUNDERS,

Tiverton, Devon.

Scenes You Seldom See



"Bit crushed in here, isn't it? Still, nice to see the sun again. Bit chilly early on, though... Is this your floor? No, I'm going up..."

Juvenal delinquent?

Sir,

The shade of Vergil probably is blushing at being quoted by Enoch Powell. Though Powell got it wrong: it was the Sibyl who saw the Tiber foaming with much blood, and she wasn't Roman as Rome doesn't exist in Aeneid VI. She's having a vision of the civil war started by the Catilinarian conspiracies, which Vergil didn't see either as he hadn't been born then. Funnily enough, the Catilinarian conspirators were a gang of extreme right-wing populist thugs, a mixture of the underclass and out-of-luck aristocrats pretending to be plebeians, not totally unlike one or two of today's political parties. Except that their beef was with the conventional aristocrats in the senate, not with immigrants. If you want Latin wog-bashing, try Juvenal.

Regards,
HELEN ELSOM,

Cambridge.

Food for thought

Sir,

I thoroughly enjoy my bi-weekly read but I never thought your organ was a gatekeeper for the establishment until I read this piece. You sound almost shrill and indignant about Mr Holford ("May Contain Nuts", In the Back, 1197), as if he is a threat to you. He has not said anything or done anything particularly controversial except offer his opinion which people can either take or leave (especially given the overwhelming evidence you imply). Some have taken it and the best of luck to them while others like you and the medical profession, are spitting out the dummy.

Those who opt for the medical establishment should consider the sobering thought that according to US government statistics, conventional medications are the next biggest cause of death after heart disease and cancer. Where are the hard questions about that? The old "there are no trials" routine you come up with is a worn out argument as unless you are part of the pharmaceutical cartel or connected with them (ie most academic research establishments), there is no funding and results are quietly ignored. The implication of your article is that nutritionists are some group of Mickey Mouse practitioners and quacks. The best courses are degree level and last three years. Most of the students on the course my wife completed had degrees in other areas already and were rational, highly intelligent people. Also responsible practitioners can join a professional body such as The British Association of Nutritional Therapists.

PATRICK BOWEN,

Via email.

"That's nice. They're planting trees to carbon offset rendition flights..."

Hobby horses

Sir,

How well does Peter Hines know the horse world ("Old Nag" Letters 1197)? Not too well. I don't know who these mythical "toffs" are riding the horses – I think they've moved on to driving BMWs, leaving the rest of us to work to pay for our hobby!

LIZ WRIGHT.

...Peter Hines chooses to ignore, or he may just be ignorant of the fact that the vast majority of horse riders are women and girls. It is one of the few sports we can practise safely without threat of being assaulted by the strange men who seem to inhabit the countryside.

He makes the common mistake of confusing leisure riding with hunting, and even the minority of riders who hunt would probably take issue with him. The women riders I know are very far from toffs and generally struggle to pay for their sport.

Mr Hines might care to guess what sex comprises the vast majority of the cyclists he seems to be so keen to support. Surprise, surprise: they are almost all men. Probably the same goes for BMW drivers.

Perhaps he should keep his misogynistic attitudes to himself. We have enough trouble trying to maintain a safe network of bridleways (which we happily share with cyclists), without this sort of false assumption being peddled about.

DIDY METCALF.

...There are around 1m horses in the UK, and 4m people ride regularly. Statistically, they can't all be toffs, surely? I have never had a horse, but those I know who do aren't toffs: they earn less than the average wage and many do the physical work of looking after their own horses before going to work in the morning and again in the evenings...

As both a walker and a cyclist, I see no reason to show any gratitude to BMW for condescendingly "agreeing to provide" an alternative route for me if they are denying the rights of others at the same time. Sadly, as my "rich" horse-riding mates certainly couldn't afford a new BMW, boycotting BMW's products isn't an option.

A. WILSON.

...I would like to stress that equestrianism is a sport open to everyone, and certainly very far from a group of "rich horse owners" as Mr Hines assumes. In contrast to his mockery of helping "the poor and disabled", we carry out a fantastic amount of work in a vast range of areas, most recently including projects to help provide opportunities for disadvantaged people, ethnic minorities, the terminally ill and inner-city children who would not normally have the chance to participate in equestrian activities.

The BHS works together with all user groups, particularly cyclists and walkers, in order to preserve and promote public rights of way and off-road routes.

HEATHER HOLMES,
Executive, Access and Rights of Way Dept, The British Horse Society.

● Thank you for the many letters on the subject. Ed.

Photo opportunity

Sir,

In light of Glasgow hosting the 2014 Commonwealth Games, I wondered whether you had a picture which demonstrates the type of welcome that the athletes could expect from the locals.

Yours faithfully,
DOMINIC DOYLE,
Worcester.

Roger and out

Sir,

Shouldn't your valedictory Hackwatch piece on just-departed ***Observer*** *editor Roger Alton have been retitled "Fuckwatch" for the occasion?*

Regards,
B. BURNS,
London WC1.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"It's time for someone else to take on the mantra"
JIMMY GREAVES, Radio 5 Live
(Malcolm Todd)

"There's more secrets in my family than there is in a hot dinner"
JEREMY KYLE, ITV
(Colin Gibson)

"I said it pre-season. In fact I may have said it before the season started..."
SIR ALEX FERGUSON, Sky News
(Steve Lemon)

"He's done well against the 'so-called Chelsea and Arsenal's..."
STEVE McMANAMAN, Setanta Sports
(Alex Pearson)

"The pendulum has swung full circle"
BRYAN HAMILTON, RTE Radio 1
(Andrew O'Sullivan)

SOLUTIONS

"Danfo: Total Toilet Solutions" – *public toilets*

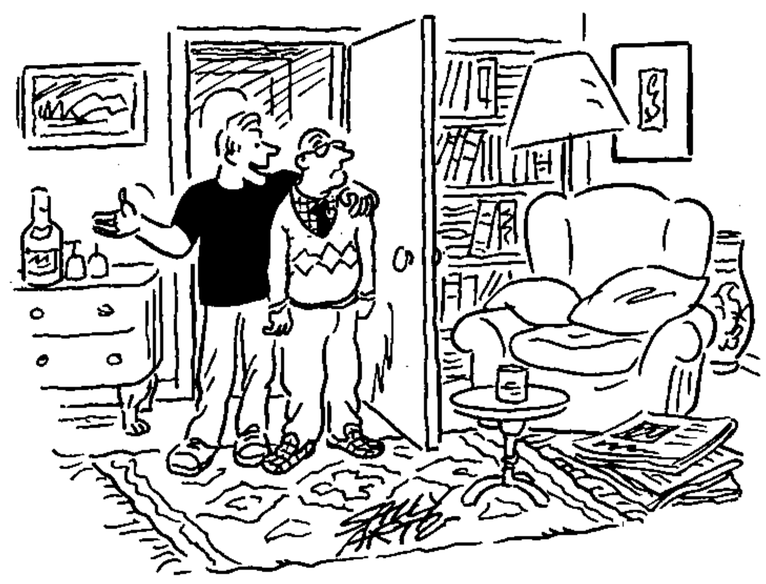
"Aquabus: A fully-integrated, state-of-the-art, safe and stable water transport solution" – *boat*

"Blackbaud: A constituent relationship management solution that can take care of itself" – *fundraising database*

"New from Watco: Anti Slip Solutions – prevent slips and trips on floors, steps and ramps" – *flooring*

"Strut 'n' Style: Sexy Solutions for your shoes in the city" – *insoles*

All submitted by readers



"One day, Dad, all this will be landfill"

Wellington booted

Sir,

Your cartoonist [Rupert Redway] is historically inaccurate in portraying Wellington leading a "thin red line" in 1807 (Eye 1197, p20). The term was first used in 1854 to describe the 93rd (Highland) Regiment's heroic rebuttal of a Russian cavalry charge during the Crimean War. Later on the same day (25 October) came the famous Charge of the Light Brigade, in which the arrogance and incompetence of British commanders, allied to a total confusion over aims, led to the needless sacrifice of 118 British sabres. Thank God we've moved on since then.

I'll get me thin red anorak,

Regards,
RENDEL HARRIS,
Via email.

Sir,

The phrase "thin red streak" (not "line") originates from the Crimean War when, as everyone knows, we fought alongside, rather than against, our Napoleonic chums (and also the Turks, anti-EU expansionists take note) against the Russians, under the pretext that we were defending the sovereign rights of the poor innocent Ottoman Empire to be freely governed by whoever happened to park the most gunships nearby.

DANIEL SMITH,
Aberdeen.

Late edition

Sir,

Now that my copy of Eye 1195 has just come through my letterbox (arrived 11 Nov in north London, cover date 12 Oct), I have much enjoyed reading the cartoons about the postal strike.

Yours via email,
ROY L. MAYLE.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "I bought the barbecue smoker at an auction," Shannon Whisnant told reporters in Maiden, North Carolina, "and when I got it home, I opened it and found something inside. At first, I thought it was a piece of driftwood, but when I picked it up, a disgusting liquid started oozing onto my hand, and I realised it was a human leg. I vomited and was totally grossed out, and gave the leg to the authorities. But once they'd ruled out foul play, they gave it back to me, and the story was getting so much publicity that I changed my attitude to it, and decided to charge

people to see it. Since then, I've been charging $3 for adults and $1 for children. I'm doing a roaring trade."

Whisnant's attitude has infuriated John Wood, the leg's original owner. "I think it's despicable, because this is my leg he's exhibiting. It was amputated above the knee after a plane crash in 2004, and I kept it in the smoker, in a storage facility. But because of a dispute about non-payment of storage fees, the smoker was auctioned off without my knowledge. I'd planned to be cremated with it when I die, but now Whisnant is making a freak show out of it. I want my leg back. I need closure."

However, Whisnant was unrepentant. "I have a receipt that clearly shows I bought the smoker and its contents at the auction. Everybody knows the leg is mine, period. I've told Wood I'd share custody of it with him, but he won't listen to reason. I'm certainly not giving it back now, not with Halloween just around the corner. I may even put my prices up." *(USA Today, 10/10/2007. Spotter: Henry Speer)*

– ● –

● *"It's an esoteric subject, I agree," Parker Westbrook told a press conference in Little Rock, Arkansas, "but that doesn't mean it's not important. According to the rules of grammar, all words ending in s should have an apostrophe s added to denote ownership, so the possessive form of Arkansas should be Arkansas's. But because the State Legislature decided in 1881 that the final s in Arkansas should be silent, the possessive form is often mistakenly written as Arkansas'. I've been fighting against this blinding madness all my life, so thank God the authorities are finally seeing sense by introducing the Arkansas's Apostrophe Act."*

Proposing the Act to the state's General Assembly, Rep. Steve Harrelson admitted "yes, there are more pressing matters we could be dealing with. But Parker Westbrook is Arkansas's leading historian, and he's been asking me to do this for decades, so I'm happy to oblige. With so many English, Dutch, and French explorers passing through the state in its early years, Arkansas has been spelled and pronounced at least seventy different ways over the centuries, but now we have a definitive ruling. Ultimately, this is not an apostrophe battle, it's a war to recognise the definition of the word 'silent'."

The resolution came into law in March 2007. There are no penalties for ignoring it. (ABC News, 6 /3/ 2007. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)

– ● –

● "I'd only gone on holiday for two weeks," complained Alicja Ziemowit to reporters in Lodz, "and I couldn't believe what I found when I returned. The council had built a new road right through my back garden, with a traffic island in the middle, without asking for permission, or even telling me they were going to do it. I now have to dodge the traffic every time I feed my cock and hens, and when I protested, the council officials just laughed. Apparently, they've passed a new law that says they can use private land for road building without asking for the owner's consent, or paying compensation. It's disgraceful."

A spokesman for Lodz local council later said "I don't know why she's complaining. It's not a very busy road, and she can still get to the back of her garden to feed her cock and hens fairly easily. You'd think people would be glad to have access to their property improved, without it costing them a penny. What's the problem? Her cock and hens are alright. She still owns the land. It just has a road running through it now, that's all." *(New York Post, 9 /8/ 2007. Spotter: Mal Function)*

Sixty Things You Didn't Know About The Royal Couple

The Royal couple received 7,000 wedding presents, including two elephants, a zebra, a U-Boat (from Prince Philip's brother-in-law Count Klaus von Nuremberg) and a trouser press from the people of Corby.

The Royal couple are avid television viewers and their favourite programmes have included: *Crossroads*, *Bonanza*, *Jim'll Fix It*, *Top Gear* and *Imagine* with Alan Yentob.

Prince Philip and the Queen have matching bathrobes, one inscribed "'is" and the other "'ERs".

The Queen loves doing impersonations and does a very good one of Helen Mirren.

Prince Philip hates corgis and once shot twenty in one morning.

The Queen is allergic to swans and refuses to eat them, even at Royal Feasts in her honour.

Prince Philip's pet names for his sons are "Useless", "Thicko" and "Nancy Boy".

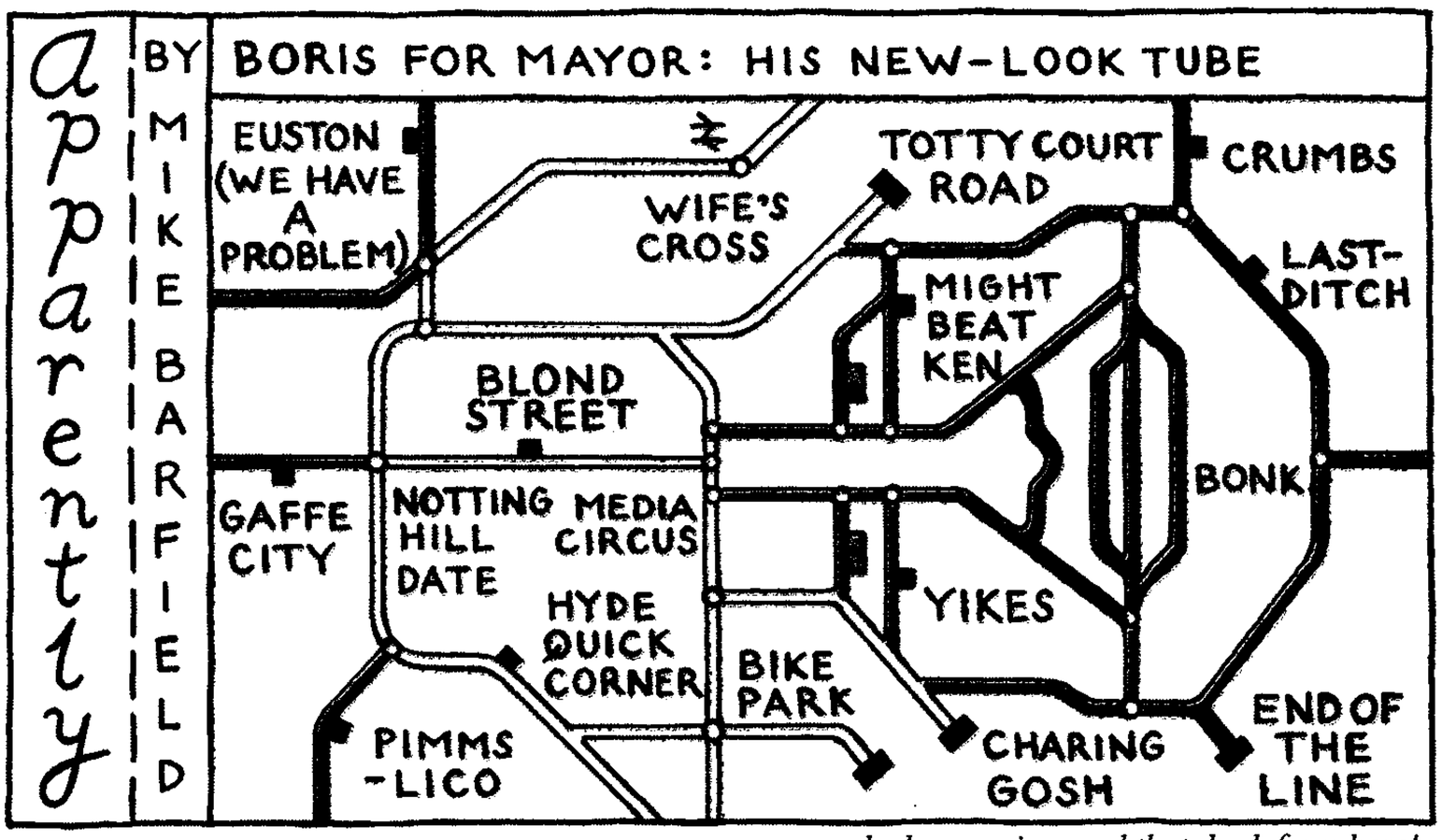
The Royal couple have climbed all the world's greatest mountains together – except Everest, which they plan to do next year.

The Queen and Prince Philip are world-class Scrabble players. The Queen once scored 3,987 points with a triple word score for "xylophone".

Although the Duke comes from Greek, Danish, German and English stock, he speaks none of these languages.

On a visit to the Gilbert and Sullivan Islands in 1958 the Duke of Edinburgh was kidnapped by a troupe of bare-breasted dancers who believed that he was a fertility god. He was only released after the Queen paid a ransom of 28 watermelons and a bowl of fish.

However, there are those who say that the man who was returned was in fact an actor working for the Russians and that the Duke of Edinburgh is now the Head of Smersh *(That's enough made-up facts. Ed.)*



...and when you've read that, look from here!

PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO.9

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader

Comrades,

The Party has ordered that the following measures should be implemented this week:

1. All public buildings, including railway stations, shopping malls, cathedrals, telephone kiosks, supermarkets, private homes, etc to be made secure from acts of terrorism, with tank traps, minefields and round-the-clock deployment of armed guards (Note to Comrade Jacqui Smith – these should be British guards, rather than illegal immigrants). The estimated bill of £4 trillion is considered by the Supreme Leader to be a small price to pay for the safety of the British people in Fortress Britain.

2. Only British footballers should be allowed to play British football (except for those from the EU).

3. Giant billboards will be erected throughout Britain, proclaiming the important message 'Bacardi Breezers Are The Opium Of The People' *(Karl Marx-and-Spencer-Food-Hall 2007)*. Perhaps in the unhappy days of Blairism it was understandable for the masses to seek oblivion through the over-consumption of alcohol. But no such excuse can exist today, as we enjoy the benefits of the Age of Change. I can assure those irresponsible elements who persist in 24-hour Blairite bingeism that this will in future be met by our new policy of alcoholico-zero-toleranceism. This culture of backsliding dissipation and decadence, created by the former leader's craven desire to ingratiate himself with leading elements of the international Heineko-Lagerist cartel, is yet another legacy of the discredited former regime which we must now do everything we can to root out and destroy.

4. British women shall be required to take up to 10 hours hard exercise each week to combat the national epidemic of obesity which was allowed to flourish under the regime of the discredited former leader (not to mention his overweight wife, the hated Madame Blair).

BY ORDER OF THE SUPREME LEADER

Gordon Brown

A CHANGE OF POLICY IN THE AGE OF CHANGE

This is the new Era of Openness, which now plays an important part in reinforcing the Age of Change. Therefore, I can now openly tell you that my policy towards the United States is completely changed from the bad old days under the discredited former leader, who made himself a laughing stock across the world by his fawning adulation of the Yankee imperialist warmonger Bush, with his doctrine of neo-Cheneyite-Rumsfeldism.

Now the Party has adopted a hard-headed, tough-minded and realistic position of 100 percent support for Comrade Bush and the People's Republic of America in their tireless struggle against what Comrade Bush rightly calls "the forces of Islamo-Fascist terrorisation in Iraq, Iran, Tehraq, Tehran and Al-Qaedastan".

These ideological reactionaries will be crushed beneath the heel of the new Brownite Dubyaism! **G.B.**

HEROES OF THE POLITBURO

Let me answer all those decadent, infantile voices in the media who have been proclaiming that, under my leadership, Britain has become no more than a 'one person state' and that I preside over a regime comprised of faceless nonentities and cringing yes men.

These are lies put about by the dark forces of Cameron-Osbornism, decadent remnants of our country's effete Etonianist past.

Our great Party has never been served by such a talented assembly of young idealogues as today (all hand-picked by the Supreme Leader). I am thinking of such giants in our struggle as Comrade Balls, our Commissar for Children, and Comrade Miliband, our Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

I therefore invite these two heroic servants of the Party to set out their own individual agenda.

First, step forward Commissar Miliband:

"May I begin by thanking the Supreme Leader for his wise helmsmanship in guiding the ship of state through rocky waters. I salute the Supreme Leader for his incomparable judgement in launching the Age of Change and leading us away from slavish adherence to the discredited tenets of Blairo-Bushism.

I hereby certify that these are my own words and not those of the Supreme Leader." **D. Miliband**

Now step forward my old Comrade-in-Arms Commissar Balls:

"May I too begin by saluting the Supreme Leader, whom I had the honour to serve in the dark days of his 'Siblairian' exile in the Treasury. I am proud to say that even then the Leader singled me out as worthy of promotion when the Age of Change finally dawned, and I am pleased to say that his personal faith in me has been amply rewarded.

I hereby certify that the above wording was solely composed by myself and was in no way dictated by any other person even though they were in the room at the time."

E. Balls

I think this demonstrates that we need hear no more about any so-called "return to the cult of personality". **G.B.**

The Supreme Leader demonstrates that in the Age of Change it is now necessary to change for dinner.

Comrade Brown looks forward to the day when all working people of Britain will wear a white tie and tails, rather that just the pampered Etonian elite of the Cameronite-Bullingdonian reactionaries.

A Public Confession by Comrade Sea Lord Admiral West, former Hero of the British Union (Third Class)

I must apologise to the Supreme Leader and to the British people for my erroneous thinking with regard to the detention by the state of all those undesirable persons who have threatened the public's safety.

When I said that I was not convinced that 28 days were necessary, what I should have said, I now realise, was that 28 days are not nearly enough, and that the Supreme Leader was correct in stating that the figure should be 56 or possibly 94 (or any other figure that the Supreme Leader deems appropriate).

I feel deeply ashamed of my conduct in this matter. I am a simple sailor, not versed in the correct dialectic of the Age of Change, and should probably not have been given the job in the first place.

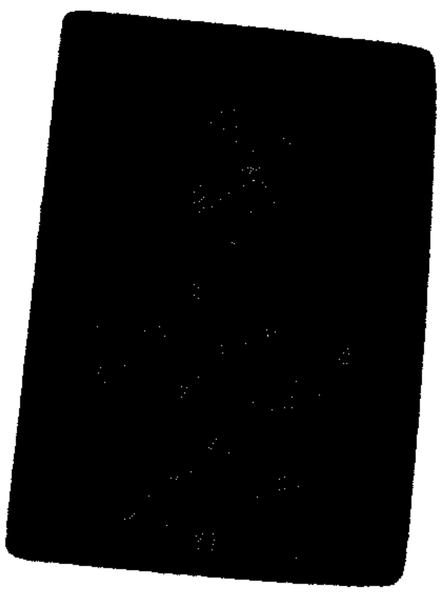
But thanks to the wisdom and forbearance of the Supreme Leader, I now understand where my duty lies.

J. West

Admiral West

"In order to secure liberty, we must be prepared to sacrifice our freedoms"

Taken from the Little Brown Book, the Collected Thoughts of Comrade Brown, from the chapter entitled "The Theory and Practice of Democratic Proletarianism"



A WARNING

Comrades are reminded that each Wednesday morning the Supreme Leader graciously submits to questions in the Westminster Soviet concerning his achievements in the previous week.

Yet now this openness is being abused by an unrepresentative faction of counter-revolutionary deviationists, led by the arch-hypocrite and class parasite Cameron, who, rather than listen respectfully to the Leader's announcements, insists on jumping up to make infantile interjections and puerile points of order, seeking only to win the plaudits of the gang of toadying Boris-ite sycophants ranged behind him.

These relics of a long-dead age of adversarial ya-boo-ism are warned that if this outrageous conduct continues, the Supreme Leader will refuse to participate further in the proceedings of the Westminster Soviet and will emulate the admirable precedent set by the former leader Comrade Blair when he treated the members of the Soviet with the contempt they deserve.

IN THE COURTS

Inquest into the death of the late Diana, Princess of Wales (Day 94). Giving evidence today, Dr Putup of 199a Harley Street, was examined by Mr Michael Hugefee on behalf of his client Mr Al Fugger.

Hugefee: Doctor, you are the world's leading authority on drunken driving, are you not? And would it be fair to say that everything you tell us here is gospel truth?

Doctor: I have that reputation.

Hugefee: May I put it to you then, that my client's employee M. Henri Paul, having consumed a modest 25 bottles of absinthe during the course of the fateful evening, was in a perfectly fit state to drive a car at 80 miles per hour through a narrow, ill-lit underpass.

Doctor: I would support that view. There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that a reasonable intake of alcohol, such as you describe, far from having any deleterious effect on driving skill, would in fact *enhance* the driver's performance.

Cocklecarrot: Doctor, have you been drinking?

(Laughter in court)

Al Fugger *(leaping to feet)*: How fuggin' dare you insult my fuggin' expert witness?

Cocklecarrot: Mr Hugefee, may I yet again ask you to restrain your client's intemperate excesses. He will have ample opportunity to make his views clear to this court as the years go by.

Mr Lesserfee QC *(for the Crown)*: Doctor, may I put it to you that the taking of large quantities of money before entering the witness box might have a deleterious effect on your ability to offer objective evidence?

Hugefee: Your Honour, that is the most outrageous thing I have ever heard in all my long career at the bar.

Lesserfee: With the possible exception, I suggest, of the fees that you are receiving from Mr Fugger.

(Laughter and uproar in court)

Cocklecarrot: Would this be a good moment to adjourn our proceedings for the Christmas break? I look forward to seeing you all again on January 23rd.

(The case continues)

"Going over the top a bit with these prisons for foreigners!"

PARACHUTE Parachute, used once, never opened, small stain £50 ono

Galloway News

50YR old female, no toes, seeks male for friendship, maybe more.

Chichester Observer

Exclusive to all papers

MARGATE HORROR

HOW MANY MORE BODIES WILL THEY FIND?

● WE don't know.

On other pages

MADDIE – NEW SIGHTING

"I'M SURE it was her," said Mrs Doris Bonkers, 69.

"I opened the paper and there she was. It was definitely her unless it was someone else." – *full story page 2.*

PLUS MURDER, SEX, GORE, DEATH, SPECULATION 3,4,5,6,7,8,9

PLUS Real news 94

Daily Mail

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2007

NEW MURDER THREAT TO HOUSE PRICES?

By Our Property Staff
Bill Board

PROPERTY prices could tumble according to estate agents if more murder victims are uncovered in back gardens.

A leading property expert said yesterday, "Murder could have serious repercussions on the value of your house. If prospective buyers are worried that there might be murder issues with their desired property they should check with the police before completion of the purchase."

"Otherwise the whole property market could go into meltdown."

Mall Case Study
Typical suburban semi-detached two bedroom house

Without body	**£395,000**
With body	**2p**

"If you're happy and you know it clap your hands..."

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

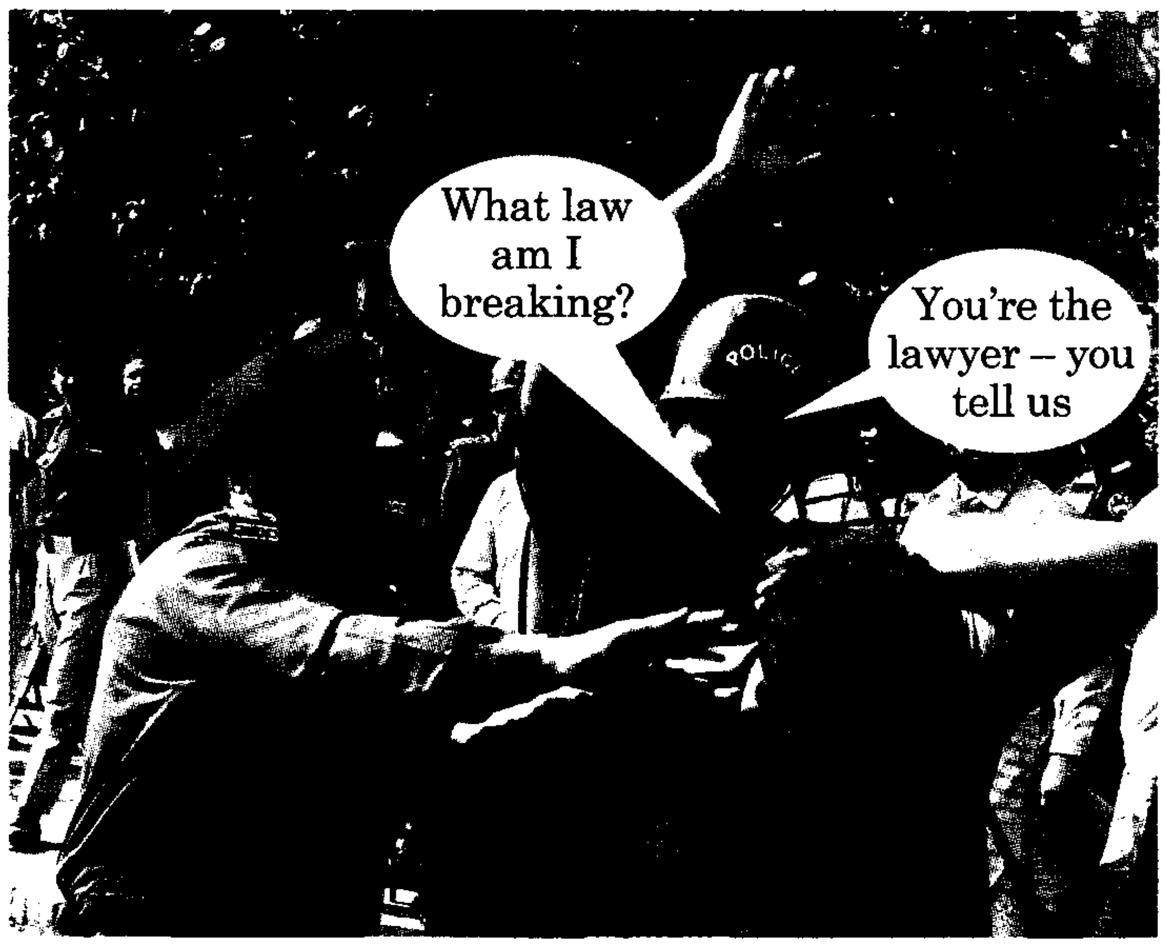
An Apology

IN RECENT years we may have given the impression that President Musharraf of Pakistan was the West's key ally in the war against terror, a highly respected hard man not afraid to take hard decisions in the face of the Islamist threats in the region, and whose use of the army to curtail certain democratic freedoms in his country was a wholly justifiable response to the threat posed to our very way of life by Al Qaeda.

We now realise, in light of President Musharraf imposing emergency rule and locking up all the opposition leaders, that nothing could be further from the truth, and that this power-mad despot's unjustifiable curtailing of democratic freedoms in his country supposedly to quell the Islamic threats in the regon is an abhorrence to all in the West, and merely plays directly into the hands of the likes of Al Qaeda.

We apologise for any confusion caused, and any confusion in the future when, after another Al Qaeda attack in the West, we give thanks that Pakistan has such a strong and resolute leader in the face of terror as President Musharraf...etc... etc...

PAKISTAN: PROTESTS CONTINUE



Head of MI5 on Desert island Discs

(From the Archives, November 1977)

Roy Plomley *(for it was he)*: My guest this week is the head of MI5 who is known as 'C'.

George Smiley *(for it is C)*: Good evening.

Plomley: Could you tell us your first choice of record please?

Smiley: I'm afraid that is classified information as are the other seven.

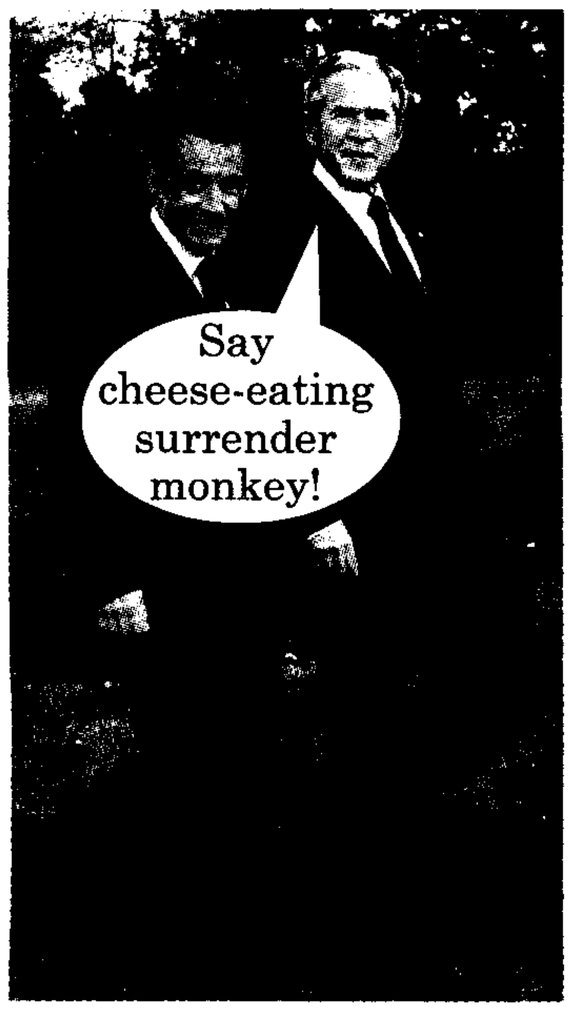
Plomley: And what luxury would you choose?

Smiley: If I told you that I'd have to kill you. Goodnight.

(Silly theme tune. "Whoosh, woosh, squawk, squawk")

***2007:* Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller**

BUSH/SARKOZY: THE OFFICIAL PHOTO



YES! IT'S OFFICIAL! St Pancras Train Time Smashed!

by Our Man on Platform 9, **Hugh Rowe-Starr**

THEY SAID it couldn't be done, but today I saw with my own eyes the miracle of engineering technology that has made the world suddenly a smaller place. I was there at St Pancras and yet, just 2½ hours earlier, I had been at Waterloo Station.

It didn't seem possible, but as the underground train ate up the miles in what was to be a record-breaking run, passengers whooped and cheered as they opened bottles of champagne to celebrate their arrival.

"I never thought we would ever get off that bloody train," said one.

"You should try the bus," said another. "It's even bloody worse."

Make no mistake. Britain can be proud today as it races ahead into the 19th Century and *(cont. p. 94)*

"No offence, but I'd rather shoot myself than spend all evening talking to you"

Nursery Times

Friday, November 23, 2007

'LET MY FOX OUT' Jemima's tearful plea

by Our Farmyard Staff **Simon Heiffer**

JEMIMA Puddleduck, the glamorous daughter of millionaire Marmite king Sir Jeremy Fishpaste, mounted an all night vigil outside the farmhouse yesterday, in protest at the imprisonment of her former husband Mr Imran Fox.

Said Ms Puddleduck, "It is true that we are no longer an item but I am extremely well-informed about world affairs and I am an ideal political spokes-duck."

Meanwhile the pig about town Mr Hugh Grunt has been seen on holiday with his former squeeze Liz

'Hurley' Bird despite her marriage to the fabulously rich Barbar the Indian Elephant. "There are three of us in this sty," she said *(cont. p. 94)*

Lines On The Unveiling Of A Statue of the Late Sir John Betjeman at the Opening of the Newly-Restored St Pancras Station

by Himself

What's going on on Platform Nine?
That used to be the Ebbsfleet Line.
But now they've done it up in style
It beats the old place by a mile.

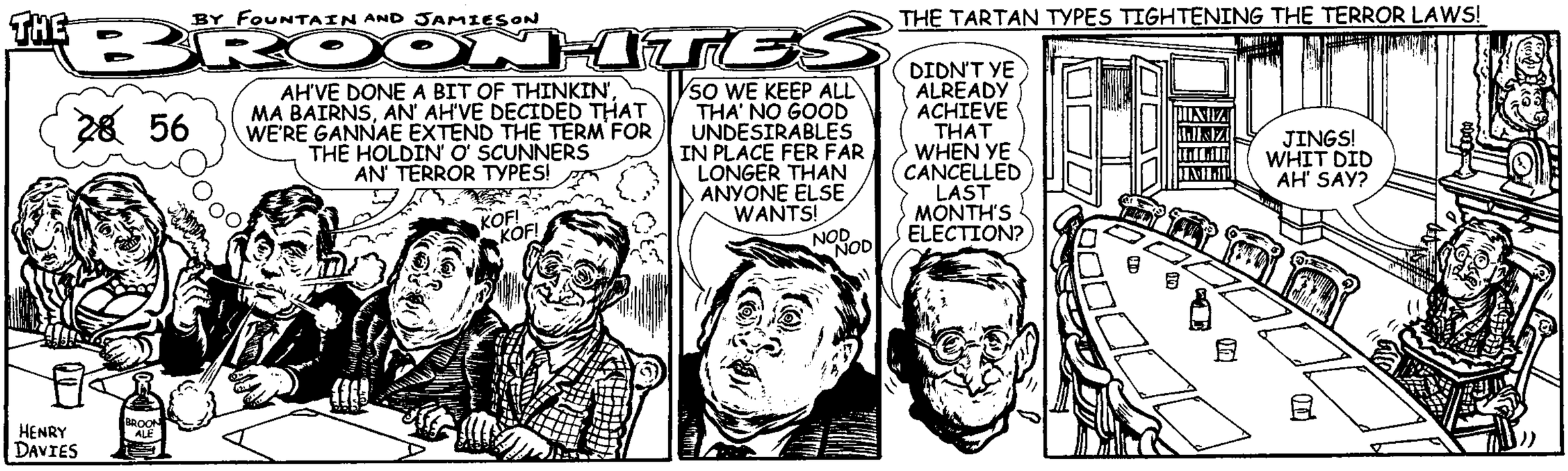
And there's a brand-new Champagne Bar
For those who go by Eurostar.
To Paris and back in half a day.
It's enough to take your breath away!

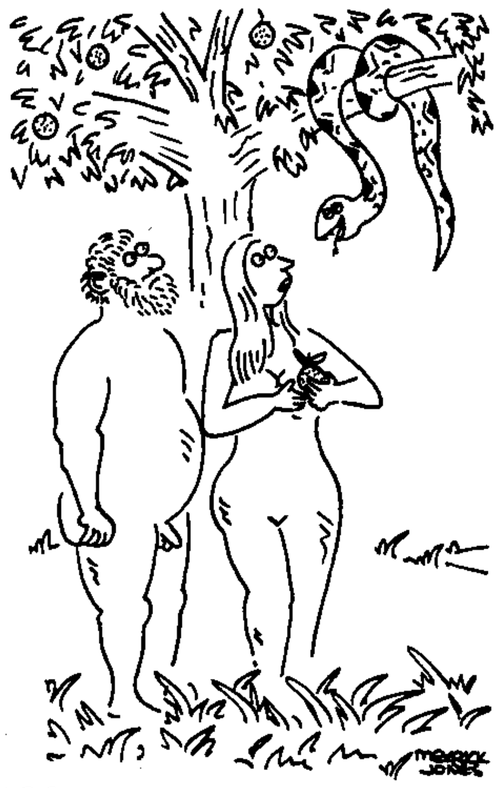
But what do I see on Platform Three,
A statue that they've made of me!
And all because I saved the station
From catastrophic devastation.

So there I'll stand for years to come,
And kids will say, "Who's that there, Mum?
That funny man in the silly hat,
I wonder what he thinks he's at?"

"Now, come on Kylie, come on Wayne,
Get moving or we'll miss the train."

(Not very good, is it? Put put it in if you like. J.B.)


THE BROON-ITES
BY FOUNTAIN AND JAMIESON
28 56
AH'VE DONE A BIT OF THINKIN', MA BAIRNS, AN' AH'VE DECIDED THAT WE'RE GANNAE EXTEND THE TERM FOR THE HOLDIN' O' SCUNNERS AN' TERROR TYPES!
KOF! KOF!
BROON ALE
HENRY DAVIES
SO WE KEEP ALL THA' NO GOOD UNDESIRABLES IN PLACE FER FAR LONGER THAN ANYONE ELSE WANTS!
NOD NOD
THE TARTAN TYPES TIGHTENING THE TERROR LAWS!
DIDN'T YE ALREADY ACHIEVE THAT WHEN YE CANCELLED LAST MONTH'S ELECTION?
JINGS! WHIT DID AH' SAY?



"Of course, some people will say it's bad for you. But, hey, what isn't these days?"

Court Circular

Kensington Palace, Tuesday

His Royal Highness Prince Harry will be attending the official "Drowning of The Sorrows" ceremony in Bouzis nightclub in South Kensington. He will not be accompanied by the Ex-Girlfriend Royale, Miss Chelsey Chavvy who has unfortunately had to attend the Opening of A Book at her course at Leeds University.

His Royal Highness will be greeted by the Pisshead Pursuivante, Mr Guy Pelly-Silly, who will present the Prince with a 21-shot salute (vodka, gin, tequila, Bacardi, floor polish, Windolene, etc.). The Prince will later preside over the Changing of the Barrel. He will then formally exchange phone numbers with Miss Fruitella Tottington-Posh and end the evening by participing in the traditional Texting of the Blonde *(That's enough Harry, Ed.)*

BLONDE GIRL SPLITS WITH BOYFRIEND

STUNNING news emerged last night when it was revealed that a blonde girl had split with her boyfriend.

A source close to the blonde girl said, "My best friend, Antonia, was at this club the other night, right, when she spotted the two of them at the bar having this, like, really mega row – apparently, right, she stormed off whilst he just carried on drinking with the guys, and *(cont. p. 94)*

MODERN POLITICS

MAN WHO HAS LOTS OF MONEY GETS EVEN MORE

by Our Sale Room Staff **Hugh Cheque**

A MAN with lots of money today sold a painting which meant that he had even more money than he had before. Said the man, "I'm very rich". *(Rotters)*

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Norman Mailer, Giant of American Literature

So. Farewell then
Norman Mailer,
Famous for having
Six wives
And many mistresses.

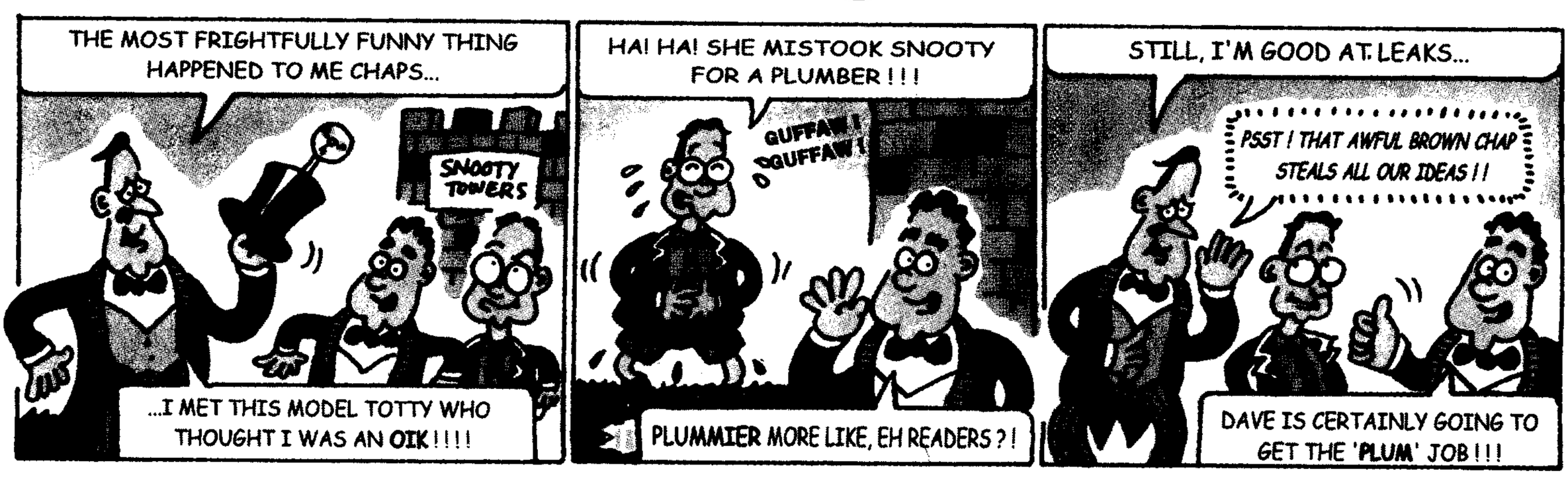
Your most famous book
Was *The Naked*
And The Dead.

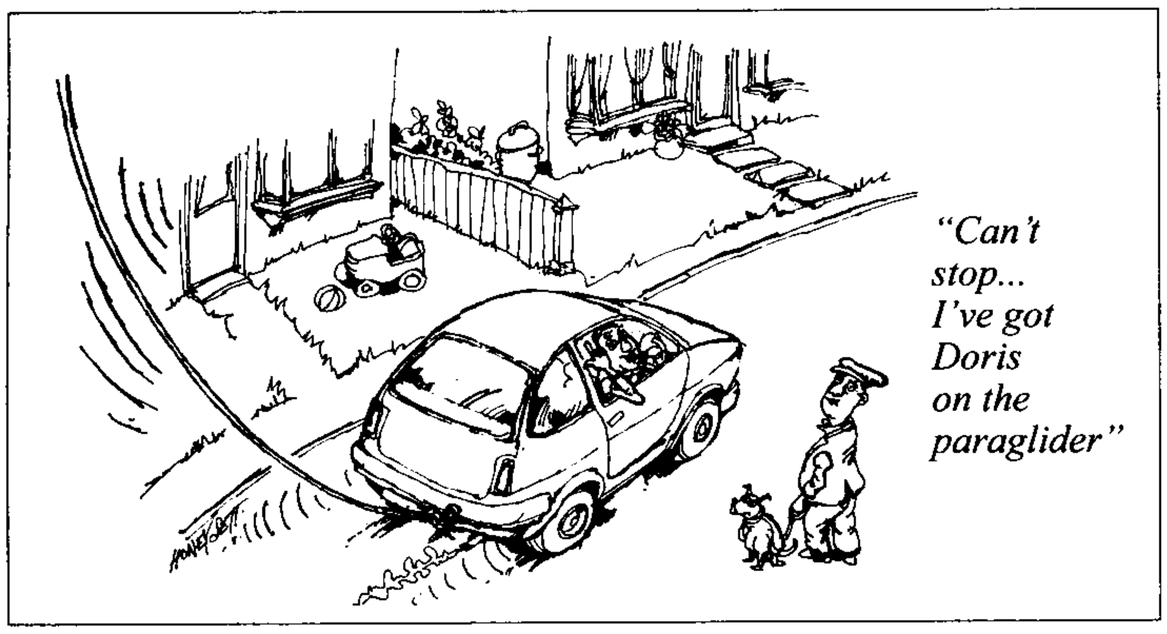
Obviously you spent
Much of your life
Being naked.

And now
You are dead.

E.J. Thribb, (aged 17½)

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS


THE MOST FRIGHTFULLY FUNNY THING HAPPENED TO ME CHAPS...
SNOOTY TOWERS
...I MET THIS MODEL TOTTY WHO THOUGHT I WAS AN OIK!!!!
HA! HA! SHE MISTOOK SNOOTY FOR A PLUMBER!!!
GUFFAW! GUFFAW!
PLUMMIER MORE LIKE, EH READERS?!
STILL, I'M GOOD AT LEAKS...
PSST! THAT AWFUL BROWN CHAP STEALS ALL OUR IDEAS!!
DAVE IS CERTAINLY GOING TO GET THE 'PLUM' JOB!!!



That Blair Chinese Speech in full

Good people of (fill in name of city or administrative region).

As I was coming here tonight a taxi driver said to me, "Are you that Tony Blair? You all look the same to me." (Pause for laughter).

No, but seriously, we are all the same in the new global economy. The progress you have made in your country – and particularly in (repeat name of city or administrative region) – is an inspiration to us all.

As prime minister of Britain, I am keenly aware of how much we owe you! $200 billion at the last count! (Pause for laughter).

No, but seriously, we are looking forward to the Olympic Games... showcase for your entrepreneurial achievements... Murdoch satellite TV... jolly good thing... hi-tech... modern architecture... envy of the world... (note to self, don't mention Tiananmen Square, Tibet, human rights, global warming etc.).

So, in conclusion, may I say that this wonderful new development (fill in name of shopping mall, executive flat complex, business park, nuclear power station, landfill site, student prison etc.) is the greatest Chinese achievement of all. (Wait for applause and cheque for £250,000).

And can I end by quoting the words of my host who remarked that a speech by **me** is like a Chinese meal. Once you have had one you immediately don't want another one. (Is this right? Please check. T.B.)

'INCREDIBLE SPECTACLE' AT THE DOME

by Our Man in Greenwich **Lunchtime O_2**

BREATHTAKING! Amazing! Unbelievable! That was the reaction yesterday to the extraordinary sight of people actually visiting the Dome.

Mummy, can we go home?

Said one onlooker, King Tutankhamen from Eygpt, "It's one of the Wonders of the World. The general public queuing to get into the building. I never thought I would see it because there was meant to be a curse on the Dome from the days of the great Blairoah Mandalsoon."

King Tut continued, "Legend had it that anyone who opened the doors to the Dome would be bored to death – but now the curse has been lifted and the whole world can see the vast riches that the taxpayer poured down the drain."

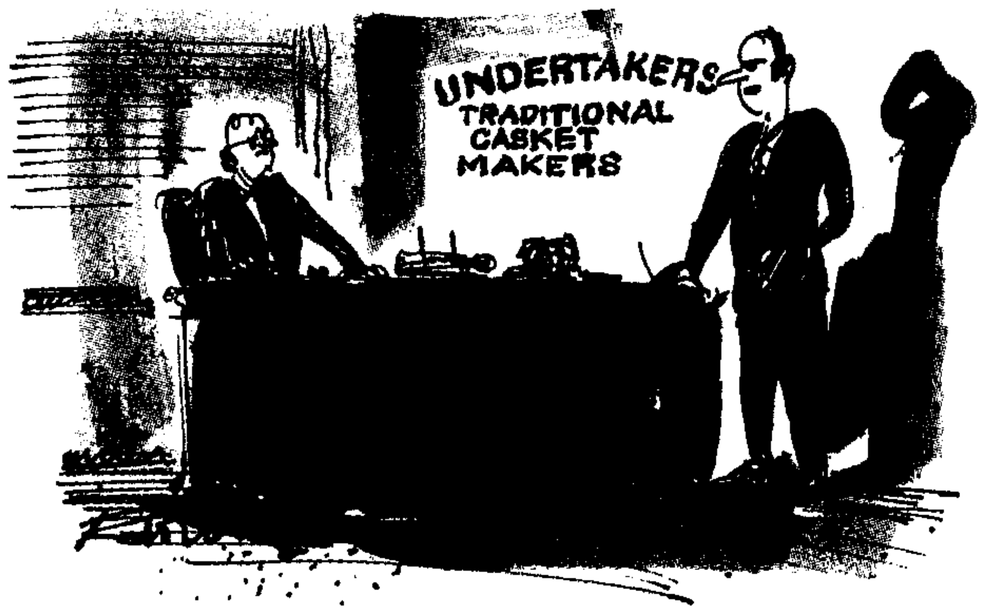
King Tutankhamen is 3,000 years old.

THE OLD BOY KING

Brian Sewell
Gives His View Of The King Tut Exhibition

Urghh! This vulgar, tawdry, ghastly exhibition of worthless rubbish makes one despair of the entire human race. That anyone should want to gawp at these dismal relics of an entirely talentless civilisation, rather than at the masterpieces of the divine Michelangelo, is beyond belief. No wonder that a curse is attached to anyone who... *aaargh!!!*

HOME OFFICE IMMIGRATION FIASCO



"Face it, Dad. We have to start thinking outside the box"

A Message From Your Next London Mayor
BORIS CALLING!!

Make no mistake. It's Boris to the rescue! With my new slogan – ***"An end to gum crime in London"***! Not bad, eh? ***"Stick with Boris – and not to the pavement!"*** Even better!

Boris

What's on Boris's agenda this week? It's the Big One. Chewing gum. Urgh! Frightful stuff, what? Sort of thing oiks spit out on the pavement every day, leaving a nasty, gungy patch of goo for yours truly to step in. Cripes! And what does Red Ken do? Nothing. He's too busy killing the pigeons, sucking up to some Commie dictator like Chavez and sticking up for PC Plod when he goes round murdering innocent Brazilians.

Here's some more of my Cockney rhyming slang!

Dog and Boner – *Matthew D'Ancona*

Jekyll and Hyde – *Bit on the side*

Jolly Good Feller – *Petronella*

Dog & Duck – *Morning coffee*

Those 94 Questions Everyone Will Have To Answer Before They Are Allowed To Enter Or Leave Britain

1 What's your name?

2 Is that your real name?

3 Where do you live?

4 What is your sexual orientation?

5 Describe your ethnicity. Are you: a) Black-Caucasian; b) Oriental-Jewish; c) Welsh; d) Don't know; e) Jedi Warrior.

6 What have you got in that bag?

7 Are you contemplating engaging in acts of terrorism during your stay?

8 Did you pack that bomb yourself?

9 Have you recently visited any of the following caves in Afghanistan? a) Tora Bora; b) Tora Tora Tora; c) Tory Tory Tory.

10 If you were a car, what make of car would you be? a) a Chieftain tank; b) an Iranian missile launcher; c) a Volvo Estate (with a bomb in the boot).

11 Is your journey really necessary?

12 Would you like a free copy of the Daily Telegraph?

13 Have you seen Maddy?

14 Have you placed all your toiletries in a clear plastic bag so that the other passengers can laugh at you?

15 Would you like to buy a copy of the Big Issue?

16 Can you read the number plate of an exploding bus at 65 metres?

17 Do you think it'll rain this afternoon?

18 Have you ever been in an aeroplane before? If so, how many times? (State number exactly, giving name of captain in each case.)

19 Is your address still the same as it was when you began filling in this questionnaire?

20 Have you spent so long filling in this questionnaire that you have missed: a) your plane; b) your train; c) your entrance to Paradise to meet the 72 virgins?

That's enough questions. Ed.

New Taxes Explained

(LBT) Laden Bin Tax costs approx. £100 extra per year for the average family household

(BLT) Bin Laden Tax costs everyone... with ID cards, new passport charges, airport surcharges, security checks *(cont. p. 94)*

Exclusive serialisation only in the Eye

My Sleazy Descent Into Total Seediness

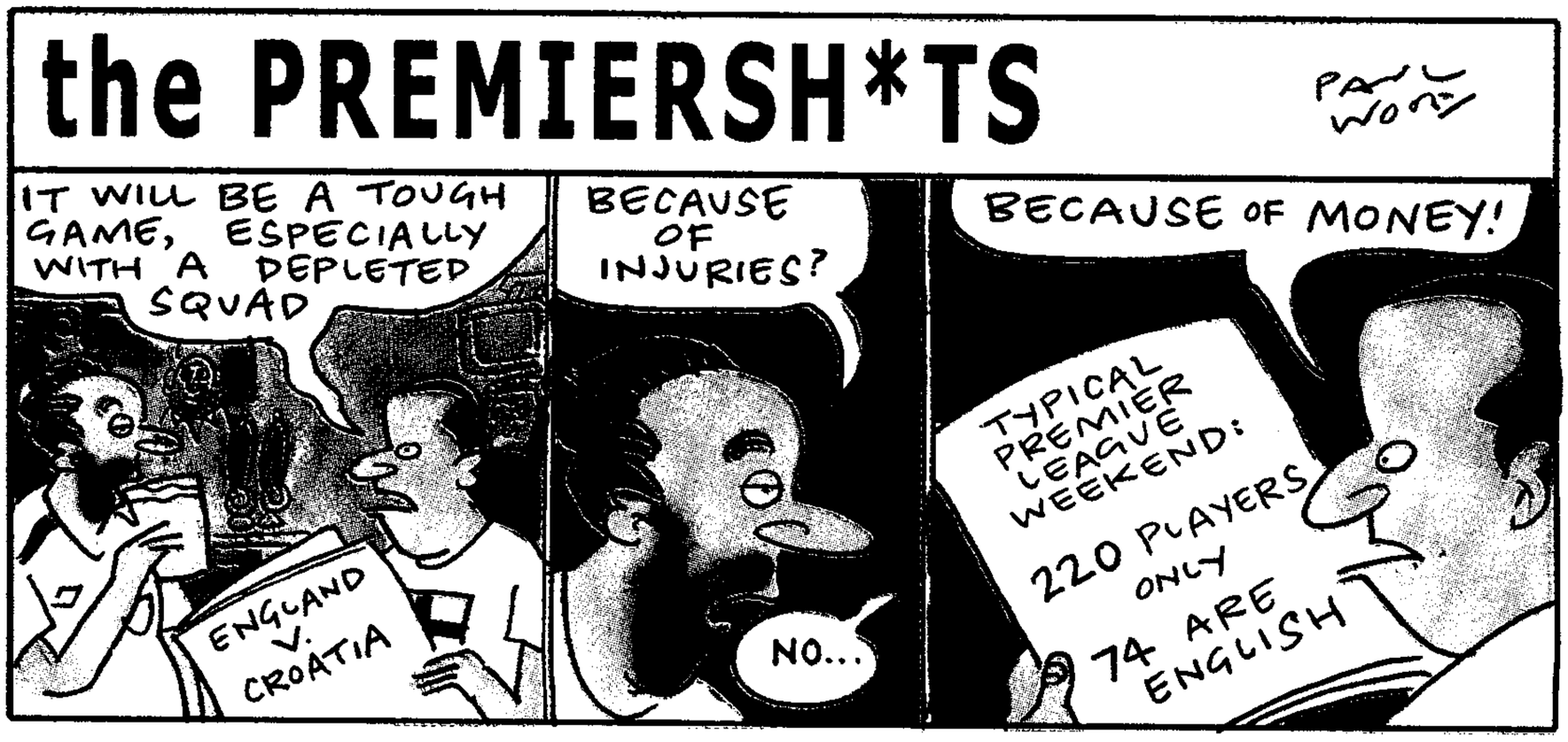
by Alan Rubbisher, editor of the Guardian newspaper

Chapter one
How I bought Russell Brand's autobiography 'My Booky Wook'

Chapter two
How readers began to feel Sicky Wick

Chapter three
Er... that's Itty Wit

the PREMIERSH*TS



DIARY

HEATHER MILLS McCARTNEY'S A-Z OF PERSECUTED WOMEN

AUSTEN, JANE: The woman became one of the greatest novelists of all time – after I'd helped her with the spelling, mind – but even then the media wouldn't stop persecuting her, asking her like "So when are you going to get married, then?" or making snide and wicked comments that she wasn't the marrying type. It beggars belief. Even after all the books we wrote together had been filmed, they were still on at her with their made-up lies, calling her stuck-up and saying, "Why'd you wear those prim, stuck old-fashioned dresses, Jane, when you could be wearing hot pants and that?" I feel for that lady, I really do.

BOLEYN, ANN: Like me, Ann spent her whole life protecting her husband, even though she knew the whole truth about him. She never wanted to be Queen, she just wanted to do her charity work, but they forced her to wear that crown and live in all the trappings of wealth, even when they knew that's not what she wanted. And then her husband goes and chops her head off! And let me tell you that's exactly what's going to happen to me – I'll be looking in the mirror one day, minding my own business, perhaps looking after one of my charities, when someone – I'm not saying who, because I don't want our daughter to think the worse of him – will come along and chop my head off when I'm not ready! I've already lost one limb at his hands, I can't afford to lose another, it makes me so angry, it really does.

CURRIE, EDWINA: The way that man treated her, well, it makes my blood boil. I was an MP myself once, and it's no secret that every Prime Minister tried his best to seduce me, but I wasn't having any of it, that's not the sort of girl I am. But that John Major forced himself upon Edwina, he wouldn't take no for an answer, he said, "I'm Prime Minister and it's the law", and there was nothing she could do, nothing. And after he's had his way with her, he just swans off to some international banquet for world statesmen, leaving her there, all sobbing and distraught while he tucks into an innocent lamb or a little baby chicken.

DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES: I know what she went through, poor lass, because to be honest I was the only one with her in the car that day who managed to get out alive. I've never really got over the guilt, because it was me the paparazzi were chasing, not her, so I feel that I caused the accident. We were best friends, me and Diana – we had beds next to each other at school, then later I was her chief bridesmaid, after I'd ditched Charles to let her have a chance – so I know what I'm talking about and sorry but I'll sue anyone who says I don't.

GODIVA, LADY: She was a feisty lady just like me, so they persecuted her for it and burnt her at the stake. Okay, we both did a bit of glamour modelling, but that's not against the law. The way people go on about it, you'd think I posed stark naked, but for both of us it was very spiritual and I gave all my earnings from it to my charities, but I don't know if she did, we never talked about it.

JORDAN: That poor lady suffers from oversized bosoms, well, that's not her fault is it, but the media persecute her relentlessly, taking topless photographs of her and even running after her with their cameras when all she wants to do is appear on television for her charities, for god's sake. I mean, what is this country coming to, that we can't leave a woman alone for one second, not even one second. Rupert Murdoch's been quoted in print as saying that he fancies Jordan something rotten and that he's determined to see her breasts in *The Sun* every single day of the week. Doesn't he ever think what he's doing to her kiddies, that's what worries me. It's media madness, it really is!

LLEWELYN-BOWEN, LAURENCE: What are we as a nation doing to that poor woman, that's what I want to know. We're forcing her to decorate and redecorate her house every single day of the week, it's just not fair, and then we say, "Okay, now you've redecorated your own house you can redecorate someone else's for a change". It's mindless cruelty, that's what it is.

MOTHER TERESA: She was a lovely lady with a very curvaceous body but she was forced to hide it all under this wimple and long grey gown because otherwise the paparazzi would be sure and try to snatch a picture of her cellulite, I mean it makes me so angry.

NIGHTINGALE, FLORENCE: I was a nurse in the Crimea, and believe me, it's no easy job walking around with your lamp, tending to all those brave soldiers with blood spurting out of them, hearing their last words, wrapping them up in bandages and that. So why are the media always going at poor Florence? She's just doing her bit, for God's sake, but they can't understand that, can they, so they try and make out she's only in it for the publicity. You know, I don't tell people this, but when I came back from the Crimea, I founded Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Kiddies, but I don't go on about it, it's a secret.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II: She never asked to be put on those stamps, she's a very private lady, but everyone jumps on the bandwagon and they gag her and they say "You're bloody well going on those stamps or else" and so they push her to the edge and they make money out of her misery. She's been waving at us for help for so long but we've ignored her but now I intend to take a stand. I'm going in there and saying to her, "Look, you've been Queen for long enough. You must be going out of your mind. It's time someone else took over. Pass me that crown, love, and we'll say no more about it."

THATCHER, MARGARET: I remember that last day in Downing Street, I gave her a great big hug and I said, "You go out there with your head held high, Margaret – and promise me you won't cry". But the paparazzi were merciless, even taking photos of her when she was trying to say her farewells. No wonder the lady burst into tears, for pity's sake. Have we as a nation no heart?

VIRGIN MARY: I'm one too, I know it's not easy. The Virgin Mary appeared to me in my grotto last week, and she said, Heather, love she said, you and me both, we've done such wonderful work down here on earth, but do they thank us for it? Do they heck as like!" Then she complained she had this sore back, and I hate to see anyone in pain so I laid my hands on her and I cured her. Now they're planning to build a shrine to me in my own back garden, where pilgrims can visit from all over the world and worship and I find that hard to come to terms with because I hate all this publicity. When I was in The Beatles, I wrote "Lady Madonna" about her, but someone who shall remain nameless stole all the credit for it as per usual but I don't want to diss him in public 'cos he's the father of my daughter, and I just want her to think well of the thieving bastard.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

TALK ABOUT A SMALL WORLD. I'M OVER IN AMERICA LAST WEEK IN THIS LITTLE TOWN IN IOWA AND MY MOBILE RINGS, RIGHT?
OKAY...
AND GUESS WHO IT IS? RONNIE THE RAT, MY EX-ROADIE FROM WAY BACK...
NO!! NOT RONNIE?!!
HOW IS HE? WHERE'S HE LIVING?
WE START HAVING A NATTER AND IT TURNS OUT THAT WE'RE BOTH IN THE SAME BLOOMING STATE!
TOTALLY SMASHED?
COMPLETELY GONE! WE WERE BOTH TALKING GIBBERISH...

Literary Review

Adam Antics

Miss Herbert
Adam Thirlwell
(Cape, £25)

AND HERE we are again, as the late Ronald Firbank might have said, in the heart of a brainy district. Four years now since Adam burst – well, sashayed – on to the literary scene with *Politics*, an ingenious novel of sophisticated baby-talk, rather as if Janet and John not only went to bed with each other but quoted Baudrillard while they were doing it.

Since that time Mr T has read a great many books in the library of All Souls College, Oxford, where he is a prize fellow, and devilled fiendishly for *Arete*, his patron Mr Craig Raine's darling quarterly magazine, where he cuts up all the people Craig hates but doesn't have time to eviscerate himself. It's dirty job, but even fellows of All Souls have to start somewhere.

Miss Herbert, the product of this half-decade or so's eager beavering, is the intellectual equivalent of the end of the pier show. Not quite as self-advertising as, say, Clive James – Thirlwell is slyer, and his jokes are less clunking – but so anxious to please, and to be seen to be pleasing, that more than three or four pages taken consecutively is likely to leave the reader with a faint sense of exhaustion.

"Miss Herbert", by the way, was a late-Victorian Englishwoman who worked on a translation of *Madame Bovary*, now lost. The book, Thirlwell disarmingly reveals, is his version of Nabokov's "ideal novel – which is not really a novel... no plot, no fiction, and no finale. It is a description of a milky way, an aurora borealis."

Yes indeedy. What it also is, without ever quite saying so, and in among its theories of translation and universal language, is a defence, or rather an exploration, of modernism. No prize for guessing which writers Mr T really esteems. Flaubert takes centre stage. Joyce and Borges are queuing in the wings. Nabokov clings to the chandelier. All that hoary procession of European avant-garders, in fact, who swapped what limited interest they had in plot and character – what Martin Amis used to call the "staid satisfactions" – for an obsession with language, and ultimately with the people who concocted that language, that is, themselves.

It is a cliché, of course, to say that when the syntactical fog finally rises from a work like *Ulysses* or *Lolita* all that is really left is the not terribly fascinating spectacle of the writer writing, but boy do you sometimes wish Nabokov had been interested in something beyond his own cleverness. Thirlwell quotes him – approvingly – to the effect that "any genuine writer emigrates into his art and abides there", which, it might be argued, is really only a mark of Nabokov's abdication from most of the things that make a novelist's work add up.

So anyway, here it all is again: Uncle Vlad "quite rightly" being mighty suspicious of books which are morally and politically charged – as if all fiction weren't in the end an exercise in moral and political engagement! Thirlwell lamenting the "uncomfortable fact" that fiction has a – *gulp* – historical grounding, Flaubert commended for wanting "the reader to have the extra and more complicated pleasure of observing the techniques", as if this were anything new in literature. Of course, Mr T is *jolly bright*, but the epigrams, of which there are a great many, and into whose devising Mr T clearly put many hours of patient labour, are glorious exercises in mental sleight of hand. "Style is timeless and placeless." It is? "A style, like a life, is infinite." I bet Mr Raine put a great fat tick against that one. As for the supporting quotations, a certain Jan Mukarovsky is hauled in to observe – not altogether luminously – that "a literary work of art always oscillates between the past and future status of an aesthetic norm."

Gosh! All this bounces happily on for upwards of 500 pages. Its final effect, curiously enough, amid the dinky packaging and the bounteous assortment of typefaces, is oddly inhuman. Playfulness, irony and so on are all very well, but they do have a dreadful habit of crowding out the people whom even Nabokov, doubtless to his great aesthetic disquiet, was forced to allow into his books.

Beowulf

Books & Bookmen

■ FIVE books in five months: that's what the new spring 2008 catalogue from the Random House imprint Century flabbergastingly boasts its US signing James Patterson will publish from February, signalling the escalation of a war with the French upstart Hachette (owners of Headline, Hodder, Orion, etc) where crime fiction is the main battlefield.

Hachette overtook Random House in February 2006 when the acquisition of Time Warner's books arm made it the UK's biggest publishing empire; six months later RH's Gail Rebuck hit back by poaching Patterson, the Hachette group's best-selling author (£10m UK sales last year), with a deal worth a reported £1.25m per book for British and European rights alone.

Watching the fighting will be entertaining, but there are reasons to be concerned about the deal's likely repercussions. For a start, a book with the name "James Patterson" dominating the front is not necessarily written by him: the former adman sees himself as a creator of series "brands" - Alex Cross, Women's Murder Club, Maximum Ride (for kids), etc – with others doing the drudgery. When interviewed by the *Bookseller* last month, he was overseeing no fewer than 27 projects, of which "only one or two will be written entirely by him".

Also troubling are the potential for imitative dumbing-down (with Patterson wannabes copying his trademark two-line paragraphs and four-page chapters tailored to readers with short attention-spans) and swamping the market. If RH keeps up the pace, there will be 10 hardbacks "by" Patterson in 2008, plus at least two from Headline; which means that in 2009 there will be 10-plus new hardbacks and 12 new paperbacks.

And Headline, meanwhile, will still be pumping out Jodi Picoult books: she frustratingly writes all her own stuff, but with a mix of hardbacks and paperbacks, new and backlist titles, releasing eight different novels a year is possible.

■ WARM words of praise in the *Observer* from Robert McCrum's understudy Alex Clark for *The New Granta Book of the American Short Story* – "seriously considered, full of nuance and detail and heritage".

No doubt the publishers will be keen to pass on their thanks in person when Clark joins in the next few weeks as the deputy editor of, er, *Granta*.

'Bookworm'

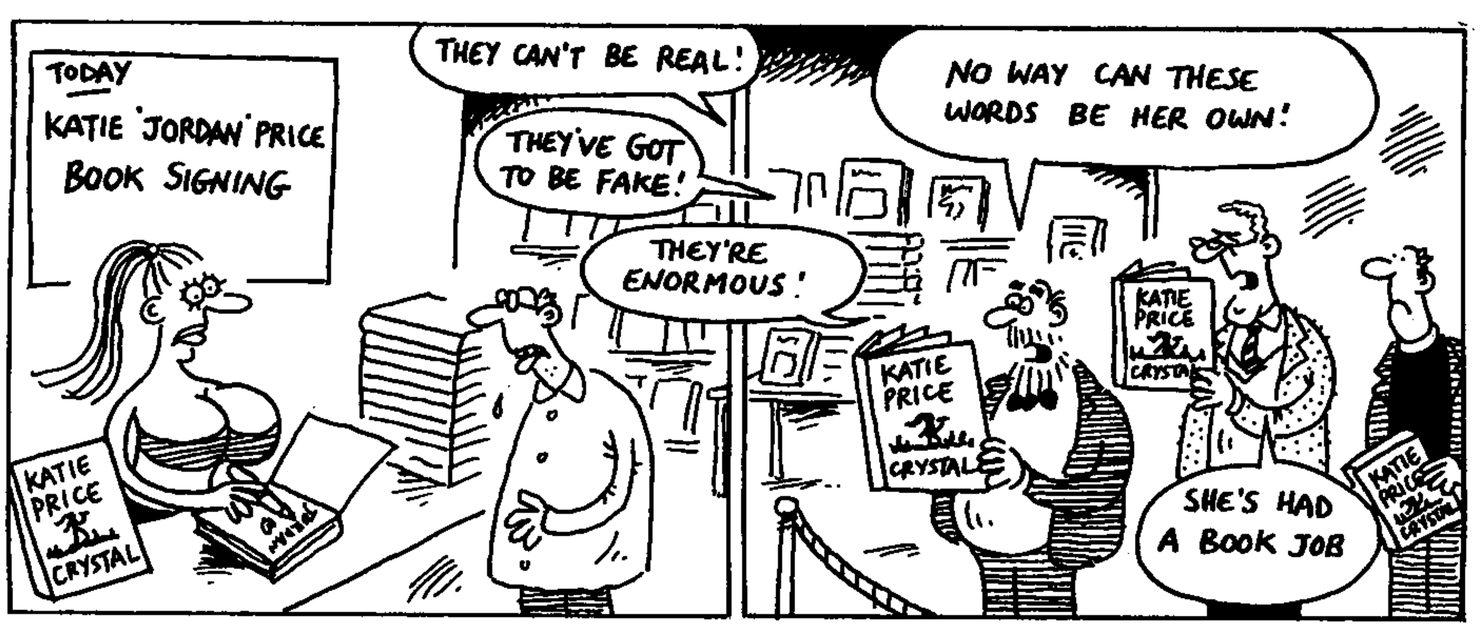
WHAT YOU DIDN'T GET ROUND TO READING (NO 94)

The Decline And Fall Of The British Empire
Piers Brendon

IN 1951 Sir Hector Barkworth was unceremoniously relieved of his post as Governor of British North-West Africa following a spate of prolonged rioting instigated by the left-wing nationalist party BICTAR under its charismatic leader Dr Xavier Lumbago. His replacement was named as Lord Mandrill, a former Tory MP and one-time ally of Bonar Law. Tall, indolent and aloof, Mandrill collected antique, oriental back-scratchers and sported a huge ginger moustache. "I've got clear of gout and now I've got to deal with Lumbago," he joked to his dinner party guests at Government House.

Mandrill was determined to put a stop to the rioting, but when Lumbago was arrested and imprisoned, angry looters went on the rampage, setting fire to the famous "Whites Only" Rudyard Club, kidnapping two members found asleep in the library. It transpired that one of them was a distant cousin of Winston Churchill and Mandrill was instructed to pay the ransom of 400,000 mowlams (about £5,000), which caused him to exclaim: "He's not worth tuppence." Not long afterwards he was found wandering through the streets of Queenstown, dressed only in his pyjamas.

Lumbago was eventually released in 1953 and at once began to lobby for independence. Forceful, mercurial, with a pronounced squint in his left eye, Lumbago had a Chemistry degree from Manchester University and was an occasional contributor to the *New Statesman*. With his ivory-handled umbrella *(cont. p94)*


TODAY
KATIE 'JORDAN' PRICE BOOK SIGNING
THEY CAN'T BE REAL!
THEY'VE GOT TO BE FAKE!
THEY'RE ENORMOUS!
NO WAY CAN THESE WORDS BE HER OWN!
KATIE PRICE CRYSTAL
SHE'S HAD A BOOK JOB

Pseuds Corner

...the mad, banned and sublimely dangerous post-teen group that rudely flung a dull and declining country into the future, bloody-mindedly and foolhardily putting themselves between the Second World War and Thatcherism, the three-day week and wholesale privatisation, the Coronation and the Jubilee, the Beatles and the Spice Girls, the loss of Empire and the Falklands, Virgin Records and Virgin Airlines... *[continues]*

PAUL MORLEY on the legacy of the Sex Pistols, *Sunday Telegraph*

Headlines is self-referential to the point of parody. 'Let's make the headlines loud and true' they coo as one, neatly summarising what many perceive to be simultaneously their greatest and worst achievement: being the mantelpiece figurines fronting a publicity leviathan that grabbed multiple sponsorship deals with one limb and strong-armed the media with the other. Yet there was a humanity beyond the Thatcherite business savvy, as the second line of Headlines' pretty chorus nails with quiet certainty: 'I wanna tell the world I'm giving it all to you.'

PAUL FLYNN on the new Spice Girls single, *Guardian*

If you go to Brazil, the smile that you see on a Brazilian's face is just its own entity. You could call it happiness, but it's Brazilian.

ABBIE CORNISH, *Sunday Times Style Section*

Their very names evoke the dialectic: 'Rev' is an appropriately motorik moniker for a man who embodies the sublime infernal machine; 'Vega' translates as 'fertile valley.' Combined with 'Suicide' they imply a darker chthonic abundance: feracious, ferocious and self-devouringly voracious but eternally self-generating, still presenting their astounding music for new generations.

NICK CAVE on the rock group Suicide, *Mojo*

Moving through the gallery, visitors encounter a series of works that at once challenge assumptions about the extent to which matter can be manipulated, giving rise to a wealth of possible meanings. In *Pulled Tooth Drawing*, reclaimed dental gold has been drawn into wire, as have the bullets in *Bullet Drawings*, so that objects with a clear function become basic materials again. In both *Measuring Liberty with a Dollar* and *Measuring Niagara with a Teaspoon* the length of the resulting wire is the height of the statue and the waterfall respectively. In this way [Cornelia] Parker does not simply deconstruct things to present them in a different light but instead plays with our collective consciousness of key landmarks or events.

Ikon Gallery exhibition guide

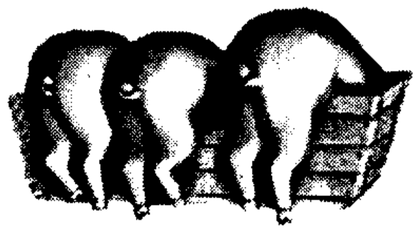
CONTRIBUTORS: Anon, Alex Hensby, Iain MacIsaac, Michael Charalambous, Clare Dannatt.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

SIR JOHN BOURN & EDS

Guess who's coming to dinner



CRITICISM of IT consultant EDS's disastrous work at the Child Support Agency was removed from a National Audit Office report after one of NAO chief Sir John Bourn's infamous lunches with the EDS manager responsible, the *Eye* has learnt. Shortly afterwards the firm went on to win huge government contracts that now keep it in business.

In 2004, following well-publicised trouble at the CSA, the NAO launched an investigation that found serious flaws in computer systems installed by EDS (even a leaked internal EDS document described them as "badly designed, badly delivered, badly tested, and badly implemented"). Its draft "client funds" report that year, agreed with the CSA, revealed that EDS systems were at the heart of the agency's failings and made extensive criticism of the firm's work.

When the final report was published, however, EDS's failings were excised. The official reason given for the omission was that the CSA wanted to get some of its money back from EDS and the NAO didn't want to prejudice negotiations. However, one insider told the *Eye* that the decision came suspiciously soon after Sir John had enjoyed dinner with EDS's manager on the CSA account, Tom Warsop. The NAO refused to comment on the affair.

The CSA wasn't the only EDS foul-up to escape proper exposure by the NAO. Labour's biggest public service fiasco must be the introduction of tax credits in April 2003 which left hundreds of thousands without benefits. Surely the public spending watchdog would have its auditors crawling all over that one? Not the ever-amenable NAO. In both his 2003 and 2004 reports on Revenue & Customs (HMRC), Bourn declined to consider the tax credit failures, again "in order not to prejudice" discussions over compensation, which in November 2005 produced a £71m settlement.

By the time this admission of culpability had emerged, the big contracts now sustaining EDS had been signed and sealed. In October 2004 it won a £250m deal to merge all the MoD's personnel administration; in March 2005 the MoD handed it a £4bn contract to overhaul all military IT; and that August the Department of Work and Pensions signed up with EDS for £2.6bn for five years.

Between them, in 2006 the MoD and DWP would pay EDS a business-saving £1.3bn. Could these contracts have been won had the company's incompetence been exposed, as it surely would have been if the spending watchdog had done its job? Probably not. Yet thanks to a helpful auditor general (who was a guest of EDS at a polo match this summer), the taxpayer is stuck with pisspoor EDS for years to come.

HOSPITALITY

How open government works

"FREEDOM of Information can be inconvenient, at times frustrating and indeed embarrassing for governments. But Freedom of Information is the right course because government belongs to the people, not the politicians".

So declared Gordon Brown in his speech on liberty less than a month ago. Yet even as he spoke a grubby cover-up of "embarrassing" information was being orchestrated right under his nose at the cabinet office.

Private Eye's discoveries about National Audit Office boss Sir John Bourn's junketing included the revelation that in three years he took out 28 "senior government officials", prompting the obvious question of just how much hospitality the mandarins enjoy despite a Civil Service Code stating that they "must not receive gifts, hospitality or benefits of any kind... which might be seen to compromise their personal judgement or integrity".

But when the *Eye* asked every Whitehall department for details for their most senior (board level) civil servants going back to April 2004, each one replied that for 2007 the information will be published next year, while retrieving earlier details would go over Freedom of Information cost limits equating to 3.5 days' work. So go away.

Government departments are in fact supposed to keep comprehensive hospitality registers, in which case it wouldn't take 3.5 days to get the information; the whole point is that they should be easily visible. The Department of Constitutional Affairs (the home of Freedom of Information, now subsumed in the Ministry of Justice) even declares in its "publication scheme" that it will give a copy of its hospitality register to anybody who asks. So can we see it? "No" replied a spokesman. Why not? "We don't have to explain why." Further pressing revealed that reneging on the commitment to publication came on the express instruction of DCA permanent secretary Alex Allan, once a great fan of opening up government as Tony Blair's "e-envoy". What on earth could he have to hide?

More importantly, why is every part of Whitehall suppressing how its top brass have been schmoozed, each using exactly the same excuse? The *Eye* understands that the cabinet office, which wouldn't comment, has ordered departments to issue the identikit response – cost limits would be exceeded – regardless of whether or not it's true.

Open government is all very well as a theme for momentous speeches, but don't you dare ask who takes Sir Humphrey to dinner.

WHEN a public body wants to cover up embarrassing information and can't find an excuse among the Freedom of Information Act's 22 "exemptions", it can always rely on Section 36 – exempting any disclosure that would "prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs".

Hence, after three and a half months and an "internal review", the National Audit Office still refuses to say who were Sir John Bourn's 170 lunch and dinner guests over three years. Such a grave judgement must be made by a figure of authority, so the law requires "the reasonable opinion of a qualified person" to determine it. And who at the NAO is the "qualified person" who decided Sir John's guests should remain secret? Er... Sir John Bourn!

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£1bn Extra cash awarded to anti-terror measures by Gordon Brown last week

£5.6bn Current estimated cost of introducing ID cards

£9.3bn Current estimated cost of staging 2012 Olympics

MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE

Stefan Kiszko

THE jailing last week of Ronald Castree for the murder in 1975 of 11-year-old Lesley Molseed, 32 years after her death, brings to a close one of the most shocking miscarriages of justice ever to have tarnished the criminal justice system.

Stefan Kiszko, an innocent man who was naïve and vulnerable, was locked away for 16 years for Lesley's murder (see *Eyes passim*), even though the incontrovertible evidence that he could not have been the killer was available *before* his trial in 1976. Scandalously it was buried – almost certainly deliberately – and Mr Kiszko was left to rot in jail while the perpetrator went free.

It was the same evidence that was used last week at Bradford crown court to link 54-year-old taxi driver and comic dealer Castree to the crime: semen found at the scene where Lesley was sexually assaulted and stabbed to death. New DNA evidence showed it to be a "match" for Castree.

Even without the DNA evidence, however, it was still known all those years ago that the semen could not have been Kiszko's because he had a condition that rendered him sterile and unable to produce sperm. That proof of innocence was hidden from the original trial at Bradford crown court, which instead relied on Kiszko's false confession.

The confession was extracted after he was held by police for seven weeks without access to a solicitor, during which time he also confessed to having exposed himself to three young girls a few days before the killing. That never happened either; and the three girls later admitted inventing the story of a "flasher" in the hysteria that followed the discovery of Lesley's body.

Mr Kiszko had a dud legal team headed by David (now Lord) Waddington, the former Home Secretary, who ran a defence of manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility. Wrongly jailed as a child sex killer, he was so beaten, abused and despised by fellow inmates he later developed schizophrenia. It was only thanks to his devoted mother, Charlotte, who worked tirelessly and eventually found solicitor Campbell Malone to take up his case, that Mr Kiszko's conviction was finally overturned in 1992.

Kiszko

Castree

Did Lord Lane, the then lord chief justice, express concern or regret that the system had failed so miserably? No. For most of his judgment he underlined what appeared to him to be the strengths of the prosecution case against Mr Kiszko. He dismissed the suppressed evidence, botched investigation and the inept defence in a few short sentences.

Mr Kiszko died a year after his release and his mother died six months later. No one was ever called to account for the initial injustice; and in 1995 the stipendiary magistrate in Rochdale threw out charges of perverting the course of justice against one police officer and a former forensic scientist after the detective who had led the investigation, Det Chief Superintendent Jack Dibb, died. Dismissing the case, Jane Hayward ruled that retired superintendent Richard Holland and former forensic scientist Ronald Outteridge may have been in the dock "for acts or omissions which in reality are those of Mr Dibb".

Or, she said, he might have made statements to them "which would excuse any criminal liability on their part". Both had been accused of excluding from the evidence any reference to tests which showed Mr Kiszko was not the killer. The detective maintained that if the laboratory had told him the samples were not a match, Mr Kiszko would not have been charged. The scientist, however, said he had no doubt that he had told the investigating officers that Mr Kiszko's sample contained no sperm heads and that the differences between the findings were discussed.

Mr Kiszko's solicitor, Mr Malone, had called for a full inquiry into the miscarriage but it was never granted. Nor did the trial of Ronald Castree provide any answers. Praise for new DNA techniques and police persistence overshadowed the fact that Castree was only allowed to escape justice for so long because of the worst kind of cover-up.

No drugs to Hyde

TWENTY ONE months ago, a road haulier named Geoff Hyde took a phone call that triggered a prison term of 22 years on a charge of cocaine smuggling – a crime his family, staff, business associates and friends maintain he did not commit.

The 59-year-old answered the call to his mobile on 27 February last year from a man claiming to be a friend of a fellow haulier. The caller said one of his lorries coming from abroad needed emergency brake repairs and asked if his mechanic could do the work at the yard Hyde used in Chertsey.

Hyde said he would see if there was room and call back, which he did. He then moved one of his trucks to make space, alerted a driver due that evening about the arrival, let in the supposedly "stricken" lorry and the "mechanic", and left for the night. In fact the lorry was under surveillance and contained 77 kilos of cocaine valued at £4m. Police swooped after the driver, Francisco Ibanez Cantero, and "mechanic", John Town, unloaded the drugs into a van.

Hyde was alerted and returned to the yard to give police keys to the office. He was arrested, and after a night in the cells he made two fatal mistakes. First, he declined offers to call a solicitor. Second, during a 27-minute interview, he lied to police, failing to tell them about the phone calls and saying instead that he had spoken to the visitors at the gate. He later told the court he simply panicked: "I had been thinking all night long that I had been set up and I thought they [the police] would say, you are connected because this bloke has phoned you."

Which, of course, is exactly what the police did think. But apart from the calls to his mobile, no evidence was found to link Hyde to the drugs consignment, despite searches of his house, office and car.

Hyde had never been in trouble. Since 1974 he had built up his company, which employed 11 staff, and made a good living with a salary of £100,000 a year, a house in Surrey and a small apartment in Spain. Every penny of his income and expenditure was accounted for. When investigators for the Crown Prosecution Service looked into his affairs to pursue a "proceeds of crime" confiscation order, they reported that "as far as can be determined all expenditure by the defendant has come from legitimate sources".

Hyde's defence pointed out that he had used his own mobile phone, whereas the others involved had used unregistered, untraceable, pay-as you-go phones. Indeed, the man who rang Hyde and another who acted as a go-between with the van driver could not be traced.

There was no recording of the phone calls, but the prosecutor imagined a sinister dialogue for the jury with the two men discussing the consignment. That, and the fact that Hyde originally lied about the calls, is all it took to secure a conviction. He was sentenced to 22 years, the driver to 18 years and the "mechanic", who pleaded guilty, to 12 years.

No one connected with Hyde, it seems, accepts his guilt and he is planning to mount an appeal. But so little evidence – a 27-minute interview and an examination of his mobile phone records – leaves little to pull apart. And with no trial irregularities or legal points to appeal, the family's only hope is that somehow they can unearth new evidence which points to his innocence – or that the real culprits will be caught.

CHILD ABUSE

Second opinion

A PAEDIATRICIAN who wrongly diagnosed dozens of children as having been sexually abused, leading to false allegations against two nursery nurses in Shieldfield, Newcastle upon Tyne, has been found guilty of serious professional misconduct.

Dr Camille De San Lazaro (pictured) has been banned from acting as an expert witness on child sexual abuse "in any legal proceedings or otherwise" for an unlimited period. The high court ruling overturns a previous decision by the General Medical Council in May 2005 that De San Lazaro was not guilty of serious professional misconduct even though the GMC had found some of her work in the Shieldfield case "inappropriate, irresponsible and unprofessional" (see *Eyes* 1133 & 1136).

The judgment followed an appeal by the Council for the Regulation of Healthcare Professionals against De San Lazaro and the GMC after a complaint by nursery workers Dawn Reed and Christopher Lillie. They brought the case after a nine-year ordeal in which they were falsely accused of sexually assaulting children in their care.

Initially they were charged with abusing six children. They were acquitted when the case went to Newcastle crown court in July 1994 when the judge ruled video interviews with children inadmissible and the crown offered no further evidence.

After the acquittal, Newcastle city council, their employer, appointed four people – three social workers and a clinical psychologist – to review the case.

Despite Reed and Lillie's acquittal, the panel branded them as depraved and sadistic child abusers who procured children for a paedophile ring to be filmed for child pornography.

The exact number of children they were supposed to have abused was never fixed, but the number escalated from the concerns of the mother of a two year old boy to more than 60 children, many of whom were awarded compensation for abuse. De San Lazaro had examined 53 children and her medical reports confirming sexual abuse were the main evidence against Reed and Lillie.

The pair went into hiding until they sued the council and the review team for libel. In July 2002 in the high court Mr Justice Eady awarded them £200,000 each in damages.

He found the council not guilty, accepting its defence of qualified privilege in publishing the report. But he found the review team guilty of malicious libel "because they included a number of fundamental claims which they must have known to be untrue".

De San Lazaro was "unbalanced, obsessive and lacking in judgement", the judge said. "Where physical findings were negative or equivocal, Dr Lazaro was prepared to make up (for) the deficiencies by throwing objectivity and scientific rigour to the winds in a highly emotional misrepresentation of the facts."

The judge said there was no basis for the review team's allegations about the existence of a paedophile ring and concluded: "The allegations of child abuse against Christopher Lillie and Dawn Reed are untrue. They are entitled to be vindicated and recognised as innocent." De San Lazaro was suspended from her job after the 2002 libel trial but reinstated in 2004.

Despite the high court's finding in April of serious professional misconduct, De San Lazaro is still a senior lecturer and honorary consultant in paediatrics at the University of Newcastle, with clinical duties at the Royal Victoria Infirmary. The hospital trust told the *Eye* she was reinstated "because she is a competent paediatrician".

DEFENCE SPENDING

Big toys 'Я' us

THE new UK National Defence Association was formed to argue that: "Defence is unrealistically low in the nation's list of priorities. Thus the Armed Forces are under-resourced (underfunded) for the tasks they are set."

Its call for extra money to alleviate the "increased stress and strain on our troops to worry and distress for their families" hit a popular nerve and generated much press coverage, but do the association's worthy members have any other interests?

Three of the four patrons, it turns out, work for military suppliers. For example, former Chief of the Defence Staff Lord Guthrie has an obvious interest in defence spending – but then so does Charles Guthrie, now a director of Colt Defense, the rifle maker.

The association makes much of falling defence spending, but *how* money is spent makes a difference to British troops as well as *how much* is spent. The Ministry of Defence has poured billions into wasteful "big toys" – big-ticket items that have enriched suppliers without helping squaddies on the ground.

Another UK National Defence Association patron, Lord Boyce, is a director of both VT Group and consultants WS Atkins. VT Group is part of the Air Tanker consortium (see "Tanker tanked"), contracted to supply Britain's crucial refuelling aircraft. The government first asked for bids for this PFI scheme in 2000, but while projected costs are rising, there is still no sign of the new planes landing on RAF airstrips.

VT Group is also a subcontractor on the T45 destroyer, an impressive ship that, according to the National Audit Office, is two years late and £635m over budget. The firm is also involved in the Future Aircraft Carrier, where "demonstration" costs alone have more than doubled to £302m.

Even more strikingly, the new association's patron Lord Owen is a paid adviser to Terra Firma Capital. This finance house is party to one of the MoD's biggest mistakes; for Terra Firma owns Annington Homes, which bought all the MoD's married quarters in 1996. The NAO said this deal lost the MoD £139m. Worse still, Annington now leases the homes back to the MoD, but unlike normal landlords it takes no responsibility for repairs, leaving squaddies and their families in grim houses and the army having to spend cash on firms who will maintain the properties.

Tanker tanked

THE biggest of the "big toys" (and the largest defence equipment PFI deal) is the £13bn jet refuelling project known as Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft (FSTA), which has dragged on for a decade with nothing to show.

The FSTA is now mired in a "funding competition" through which the consortium that should be delivering it, led by EADS, is still trying to borrow the money it needs. The current squeeze on credit is thought to be adding hundreds of millions to financing costs that could have been avoided through conventional procurement and will inevitably be passed on to taxpayers (unless rumours that the deal is to be pulled to spare defence budgets prove accurate).

The project has already cost upwards of £30m since it was put in an "assessment" phase seven years ago. One firm that won't lose out, though, is the consultancy that has pocketed much of the cash, KPMG. Nor will the partner responsible, Tim Stone, now running the government's work on costing nuclear decommissioning.

UK AID SCANDAL

Help yourself

TREBLES all round at Actis, the privatised fund manager which controls how billions of pounds of UK aid is spent helping the poor in the developing world.

Actis is the fund management arm of the government's development fund CDC (formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation). Accounts just published reveal that the partners who bought 60 percent of it for £373,000 in 2004 have done jolly well, profits growing by 34 percent to $19m last year.

The "member with the largest entitlement", almost certainly senior partner Paul Fletcher, trousered $2.2m, up 18 percent. The staff didn't do too badly, either: the 184 employees, including the most junior assistant, *averaged* $347,000 each – helped by "long term performance payments" totalling $32m and "short term incentive payments" of $11m under incentive arrangements dreamt up by consultants McKinsey.

Most of these payments come straight out of CDC's coffers, ie development funds. Which might not have been so bad if Actis had been sold for a fair price, but not when 60 percent of the outfit was flogged for £373,000. As *Eye* 1195 reported, the National Audit Office recently valued just the government's 40 percent remaining stake at between £182m and £535m.

So who agreed the £373k value for 60 percent of Actis? None other than KPMG, which is now, er, making millions out of Actis. In less than three years the beancounters have gone on to receive $355,000 for auditing Actis and $796,000 for unspecified "other" services – again, all out of development funds.

The taxpayer's interests should be protected by the Shareholder Executive within the Department for Business Environment and Regulatory Reform (BERR). The man responsible there is Mark Russell, who in 2004 happened to work in the very corporate finance department at KPMG that was valuing the firm at tuppence ha'penny, though BERR denied he was personally involved.

KPMG's conflict of interest pales next to Fletcher's. As CDC chief executive at the time, then scratching a £250,000-a-year living, he was selling Actis while also leading the consortium that would buy it – whereupon he would quadruple his income and make an instant multi-million pound gain on his share in the firm at next to no personal risk. BERR claimed that Fletcher and co were excluded from the valuation of the stake they would buy, while Fletcher's pay is "typical for the [private equity] industry". They had "carried out no valuation of his shareholding".

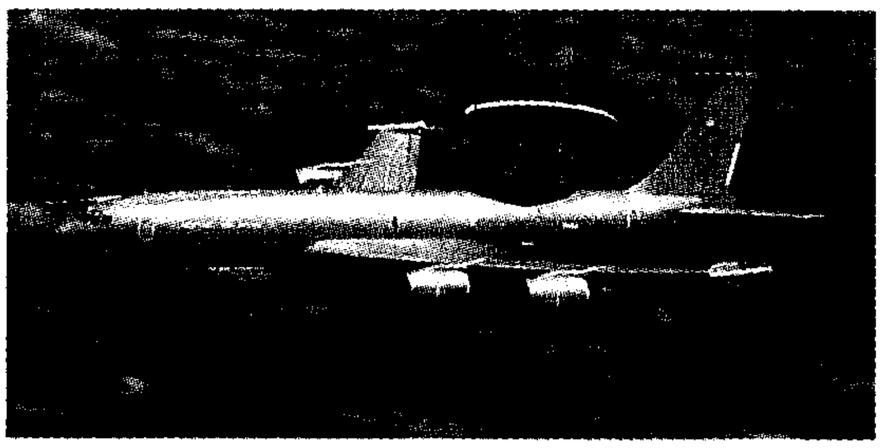
Who cares about all this? Not government or parliament – neither has asked a single question about the scandal. And still both BERR and the Department for International Development (of fat cats' bank balances), which pushed the sell-off, refuse to say how the pitifully low £373k was reached or anything about the fees that enable the Actis millionaires to milk the world's poor.

THE RAF FLEET

Down the hatch

THE dangers of operating the RAF's ancient fleet of Nimrod electronic reconnaissance aircraft over Iraq and Afghanistan have been widely reported, with the deaths of 14 crew last year being blamed on leaky fuel tanks and the weaknesses in overworked airframes.

But the RAF has another airborne early warning and command and control aircraft performing similar tasks that also poses potential risks: the E-3D Sentry (pictured).



Based on the Boeing 707, an airframe as ancient as the DeHavilland Comet adapted for the Nimrod, the RAF's E-3D fleet of seven planes is operated by 8 and 23 Squadrons based at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire.

They were bought "off the shelf" from the United States to, er, replace the Nimrod and boast more than a few quirks of their own. One of them, ZH101, for example, is so old that its altimeter still reads in inches of mercury rather than the milibars preferred by practically everyone else.

At home, the E-3D Sentries watch for intrusions into UK airspace and are deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan to identify friendly and enemy forces and to control strike aircraft, making them available to ground forces when air support is needed.

This is handy and much needed support. But many hours in the air have increased wear and tear and subsequent maintenance time. Over Christmas last year, virtually all of the RAF's E-3D fleet around the world was grounded.

Far more serious, though, was the recent apparent loss of a hatch – in flight – from ZH101 while it was climbing out over the Humber estuary from Waddington and, according to an anonymous source, another serious incident in the UK that required an entire aircraft to be rewired.

The RAF are still searching for the hatch.

PROCUREMENT

Fire them

WHAT is the point of the government's fire service procurement company? After spending more than £2m in the past two years, Firebuy is only now ready to sign a 15-year contract to source all uniforms and protective gear from a single company – and it is a firm convicted for trades description offences with regard to fire fighters' clothing!

Fire service minister Parmjit Dhanda told parliament in July that Firebuy had so far spent £1.1m on salaries and £11,000 on directors' expenses, plus just over £1 million specifically on the Integrated Clothing Project (ICP). But what if anything have they actually achieved?

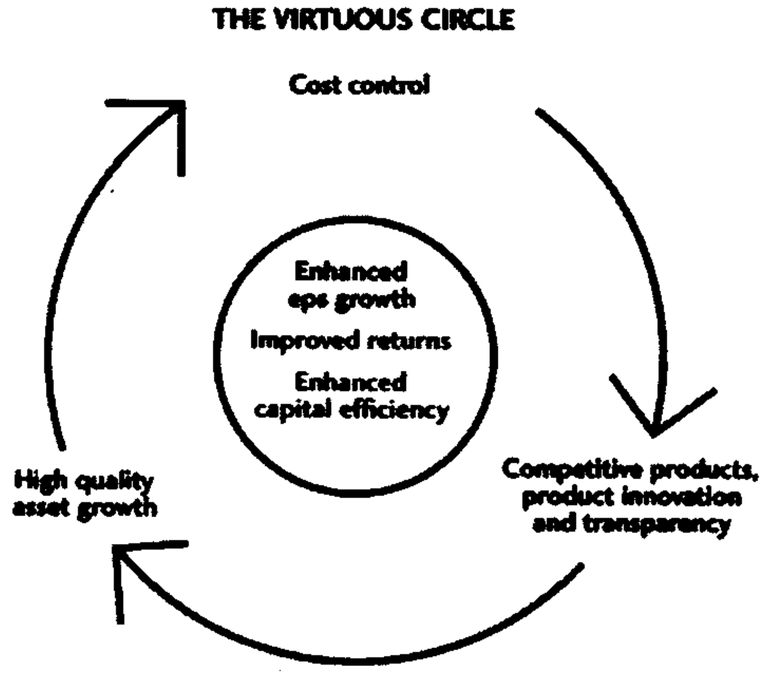
After it was formed in 2005, Firebuy took over the ICP from the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority. It then wasted 18 months seeking PFI status for the scheme, which was eventually refused. In May, it announced that a preferred bidder, Bristol Uniforms Ltd, had been chosen.

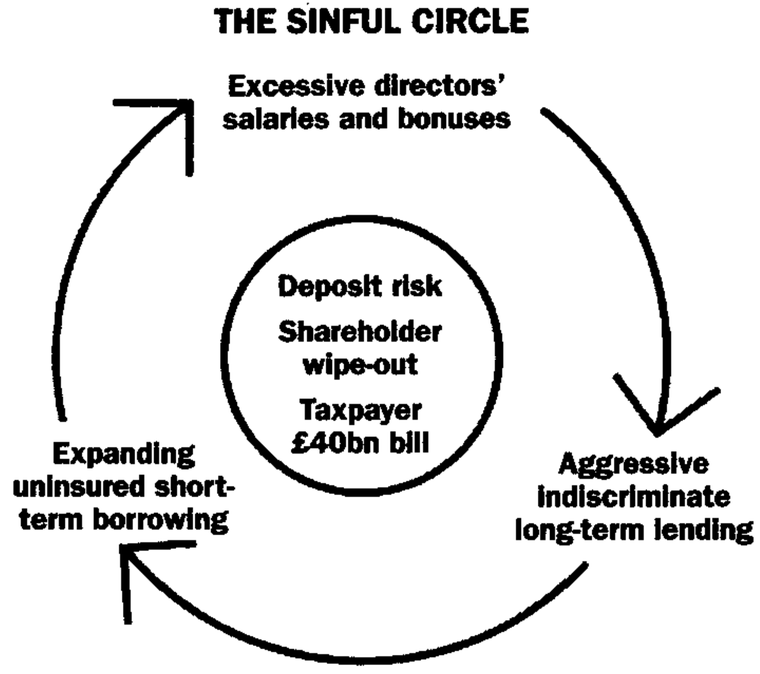
A court challenge by defeated bidder Lion Apparel revealed that Bristol Uniforms had failed to declare three convictions for trade descriptions offences during the bidding process. However, the court ruled in October that it was up to Firebuy whether or not to disqualify Bristol once it found out about the offences and refused to grant an order preventing Firebuy from signing a contract with Bristol. So they are going to do it anyway.

In the City

ARGUMENTS about the "future" for Northern Wreck become ever more unreal.

Since the Bank of England rescue in mid-September, Britain's fifth largest mortgage lender has been bust and is now even more so. Without the £24bn pumped in by the Bank and the guarantee of all deposits – another £15bn or so - from the Treasury, the directors would long ago have had to place the company into administration or liquidation or face prosecution for trading while insolvent. There would then be nothing left for shareholders – increasingly "bottom fishing" hedge funds which have bought recently - after those taxpayer debts were repaid.





This is not Railtrack. Northern Wreck was not privatised. It was converted from a mutual building society. The lack of shareholder value is recognised by the low bids submitted by the would-be "rescuers".

So why are they bidding at all? Because so long as the taxpayer continues to leave its money in, they might be able to break up the bank, sell on its pieces and make a big profit. But what is in that for the taxpayer? All the risk and none of the profit. Remember QinetiQ? For the bidders it is "heads we win, tails you lose". Having got themselves into a £40bn mess, Gordon Brown and Alistair Darling now have to find a way out that does not – as in so many of Brown's PFI deals – leave the taxpayer with a bill and private enterprise with a profit. Which is why many in the City now recognise the best way out is for the Bank of England, as it has done before, to take over the failed bank saving depositors and jobs, but not shareholders.

IT MUST seem rather churlish to Michael Ashcroft given all his good works – fighting crime, backing education, supporting Victoria Cross heroes, saving the whale (and the Conservatives) – that there is an abiding interest in such a private matter as whether, or indeed where, he pays any tax. But these are legitimate questions for the Tories' major backer – especially, it seems, at the *Guardian*, which shows less interest in the tax status of major Labour donors such as Sir Ronald Cohen and Lakshmi Mittal.

The recurring issues over Lord Ashcroft are whether or not he has delivered on a pledge to take up "permanent residence" in the UK, implicitly making himself liable for British tax, when he was eventually given his peerage in 2000 for services to Tory finances; and whether he has paid or still does pay any UK tax. The Ashcroft camp declare that he has done all that he promised to do, but without spelling out what that was. His critics point to the fact that in a 2004 entry relating to the payment of allowances for his far from avid attendance at the House of Lords, he still listed his "main residence" as Belize – the small Central American country he liked so much he bought it. Ashcroft will not say if that has changed.

The Lords test for residence may be very different to that for tax liability, and whether Ashcroft agreed to the latter is less than clear. Also unclear is whether the terms of that agreement to obtain the peerage required Ashcroft to have "permanent residence" and liability for UK tax forever onwards, or just for the first year after it was awarded. There is no mechanism to enforce an agreement anyway.

As the *Eye* has pointed out on several occasions since 2000, the tax price Lord Ashcroft expected to pay for his peerage was largely up to him to decide; in essence, whether he received or generated any income in the UK. The assumption was that any pain would be strictly limited.

So what is Lord Ashcroft's UK tax status, other than enviable? This is the question he (like many Labour donors) refuses to answer on grounds of privacy. To understand what the answer might be requires an understanding of the complexities of UK tax law – a point often made by his defenders.

Britain, unlike most countries, has three tests for personal tax liability: "resident", "ordinarily resident" and "domicile". "Resident" means having a UK home and spending on average more than 90 days in it every year. "Ordinarily resident" means living here fulltime.

"Domicile" is a unique British concept which seeks to tie the individual to a single country by way of a permanent home or intention to live there indefinitely, family history and the way they live their life – where is the family home, their closest connections, their likely burial place. There are two types of domicile but an individual can only have one at any one time, unlike with residence or nationality. Domicile of origin is inherited from the father. A domicile of choice, as the name suggests, is decided by the actions of an individual who wishes to shed their domicile of origin – something the taxman makes very difficult.

These issues have just featured in a crucial High Court case. Earlier this month, businessman Robert Gaines-Cooper lost his appeal against a decision that he had never lost his UK domicile of origin despite claiming to have moved to the Seychelles in 1976 and established the Indian Ocean island as his domicile of choice. That initial decision by the Special Commissioners of Tax supporting the Revenue & Customs also signalled a change in the rules (since put into proposed legislation) severely restricting the amount of time "non-doms" or "non-residents" can spend in the UK without incurring a tax liability. Previously the days of arrival and departure were not counted in calculating the 90 days a year limit. Which was why so many commuted Tuesday to Thursday every week from homes in Monaco, or even further, to offices in London. Now 90 days will mean exactly that, not 270.

The Gaines-Cooper judgment by Mr Justice Lewison sets out the standards for deciding domicile. It will no doubt be closely studied by many business figures, including perhaps even Lord Ashcroft. Where is the chief or principal residence if an individual has more than one home? Had the individual become a citizen of his domicile of choice? How much time was spent there? Was more time spent in any other country or the UK? Did the family live in the domicile of choice? Was the intention to reside there for an unlimited time?

Gaines-Cooper was found to have failed these tests largely because of his retention of a home in and continued links to Britain, the amount of time he spent here, the amount of time he spent outside the Seychelles, and the fact that his wife and child lived mainly in the UK and had British citizenship, while he had not become a Seychelles citizen. The ruling is likely to be appealed, but for now that is the law. A judicial review has still to decide on whether the 90-days rule will apply retrospective to the Finance Bill changes.

Most Britons tick all three boxes as "resident", "ordinarily resident" and "domiciled", and so are taxable on their worldwide income and assets. So where does all this leave the peripatetic British-born Lord Ashcroft?

"Resident"? It is admitted implicitly by Ashcroft that he was "non-resident" in the tax year 1999-2000, before he was made a peer. Ashcroft confirmed in February 2001 that he "will pay tax in the current year". By then there was a London home, bought in the late Nineties by a Belize-based company on behalf of his wife Susan. So he could be considered "resident" for UK tax purposes. However, the taxman looks very closely at those who declare they have changed their UK domicile but still have a home here – as Gaines-Cooper discovered. Ashcroft still gives a Westminster address.

And just how "resident" is the Tory peer? How much time does he spend in Britain? After he was made a "working peer", Ashcroft accepted that he could not carry out that role while "sitting in another country". But the Lords attendance records show that his lordship only attended 71 times in the session May 2005 to November 2006. In previous sessions the figures ranged from 42 to 12. So all well within the crucial 90 days rule,

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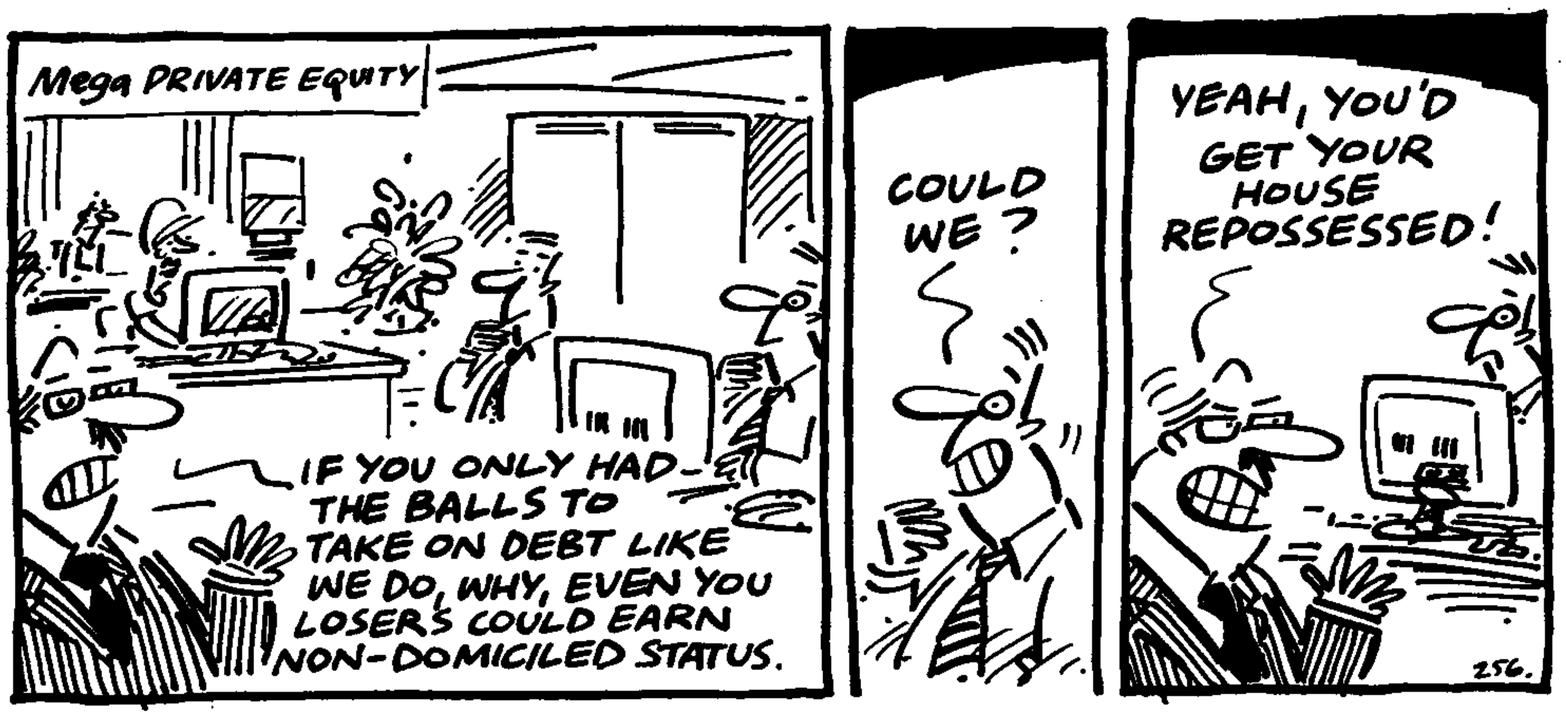
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256.

although that may not be strictly relevant in his case as the Lords and tax definitions may differ. And in any event "resident" only creates a liability for UK source or remitted income.

"Ordinarily resident"? Almost certainly not. Since the mid-Eighties Ashcroft has had homes in Florida and Belize and ran his companies from first the US and Bermuda and now Belize, where he has been active since 1987. The Florida home was sold around 1997-8. All his Belize companies are free from most local tax for 30 years under a deal he negotiated in 1990 in return for his investments. Whether Ashcroft pays any significant personal tax in Belize is also uncertain, especially if all the assets are owned in discretionary trusts or other offshore havens, such as the Turks & Caicos islands where he has a presence. So that would put Ashcroft outside the UK tax net on his worldwide income and assets.

"Domiciled"? It seems probable that after returning to Belize in 1982 (he had been at school there) Ashcroft may have acquired a domicile of choice there. Two years ago, in another tax case, it was stated that a person could only acquire a new domicile by establishing residence in another jurisdiction with the intention of remaining there permanently or indefinitely. *Dirty Politics, Dirty Times*, Ashcroft's book chronicling his libel battle with the *Times*, published in 2005, suggests that he had a UK domicile of origin but that he now considers Belize his home. Ashcroft refers repeatedly to Belize as his "adopted homeland" and states that when he dies his ashes are to be scattered there. He listed Belize at the Lords as his "main residence" – meaning "chief or principal", as in the Gaines-Cooper case? He is a Belize citizen. Up until his peerage he also enjoyed diplomatic immunity as the Belize ambassador to the UN. So he may well pass many of the tests Gaines-Cooper failed.

As a "non-dom", Ashcroft would face no UK tax on his worldwide income and assets, but as a Belize citizen who has been UK resident for more than seven years, he could face a swingeing £30,000 annual charge from next April if he wants to continue to be "resident" here. As he has dual British citizenship, whether this "non-dom" charge will apply. Also, the taxman might have to prove that he owned anything, as distinct from what was owned by trusts of which he was neither settlor (creator) nor beneficiary. Ironically, the annual levy was poached from Ashcroft's own party, so he no doubt agreed.

What does it mean, therefore, if Ashcroft is "resident" but "non-domiciled"? For a start, it is likely that while he was non-resident, offshore family trusts were created to hold all his business assets. Even if he then becomes UK "resident", these trusts would remain outside UK tax. So it seems unlikely, unless any of the proceeds are received in the UK, that any UK tax will be payable on Ashcroft's amazing £133m score from last month's sale of the loss-making cleaning and maintenance company OneSource, which is Belize-based but AIM-listed.

Is Ashcroft paying any UK tax? Well, there are no UK company directorships so no UK-generated director's fees to be taxed. There could be a taxable benefit from any property as a deemed shadow director if an offshore company owned it. The Lords' daily allowances of £82.50 are probably tax-free. And that could well be that unless Ashcroft remits money into the UK for living expenses.

So has Ashcroft done what he said he would do to obtain the peerage? Technically the answer is probably yes. He has a permanent home available, he has or did at least for a time become UK resident and as such he did or may still pay UK tax on any income received here. But the impact on his worldwide £800m fortune has probably been negligible and is likely to remain so. All thanks to the best advice and all perfectly legal.

Tax experts state that today it is possible for the super-rich to effectively be citizens of a world in which they pay no income or capital taxes anywhere. Lord Ashcroft of Chichester may be just such a person.

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 353

by Cyclops

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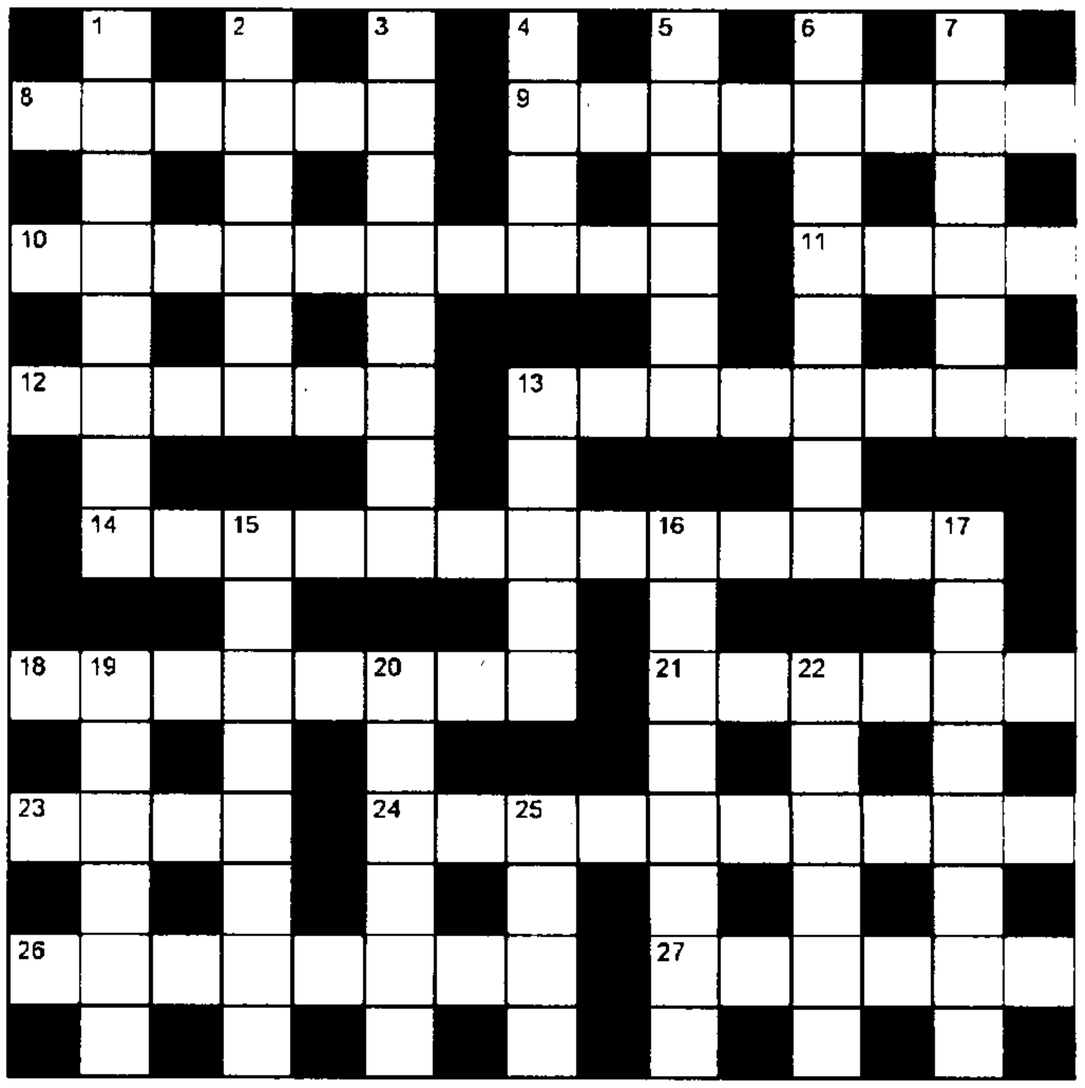

ACROSS

8 One name for Madonna's no.1: Snitch (6)
9 Drugs supplied by tosser I'd tossed (8)
10/24 Mature Fish's beer in barrelfuls? That'll give you balls (1,4,2,3,10)
11 Tip from Cameron bound to produce sod all? (4)
12 True, getting screwed by American, gives a person a start in life (6)
13 Cobblers toss back hair (8)
14 Duke leading fanatical semi-military group might be a threat to Brown? (5,8)
18 Woman's lover has decorated, medium one (5,3)
21 Monica extremely taken aback by President's surprise move? (6)
23 European city responsible for personal problem: getting stuffed by a load of sailors (4)
24 See 10ac.
26 Maude taking top off – without pressure, breast bent (8)
27 Road construction and sex expert (6)

DOWN

1 Occupying bedsit, bloke activated blow-up doll? (8)
2 The issue of a blustering politician's latest broadcast? (3,3)
3 Some debs screwed around, having a number of studs (8)
4 City big in clothing has star Jennifer jack off (4)
5 Union crushed by Iron Lady (mad, youth gone) – "A type of outmoded social system" (6)
6/25 Hoping to reduce girth of misshapen dong? Gate no. II (5,2,1,4)
7 Port combative sports types poured into Greek (6)
13 Doctor in bra whom Brenda makes wait (5)
15 Wood's first old queen? (8)
16 One needs one to embrace New Labour – hardly cool (2,1,5)
17 Imperious unnatural ability needed to interrupt party jerk (8)
19 Rude brat tossed without having an erection (6)
20 Excrement all over fudge (4,2)
22 Throw up over stout-'earted type's jacket (6)
25 See 6dn.

Crossword 352 winner: BORRIE LOWE

ACROSS: 1 Crudity 5 Hand job 10/7/18 Attention deficit disorder 11 Faff 12 Stansted 13 Uncool 14 Stress 17 Erection 21 Manure 23 Condom 24 Tumesces 27 Stye 28 Smack-head 29 Upgrade 30 Oratory.

DOWN: 2 React 3 Detente 4 Tenet 6 Ad nauseam 8 Off colour 9 Piddle 15 Thin on top 16 Sodomised 19 Old dear 20 Ratbag 22 No sweat 25 Maker 26 Elder.

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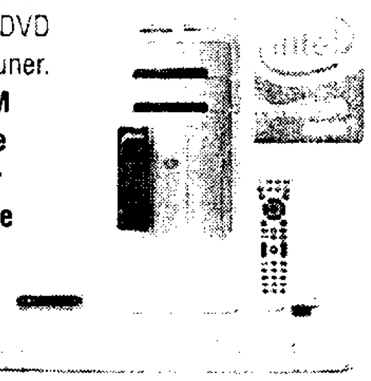

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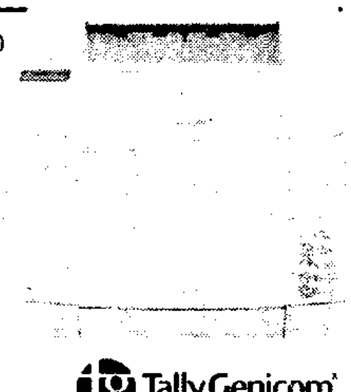

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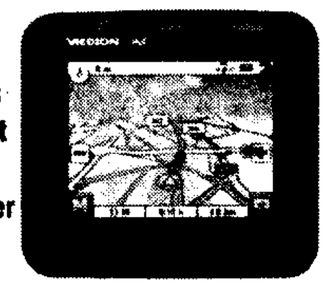

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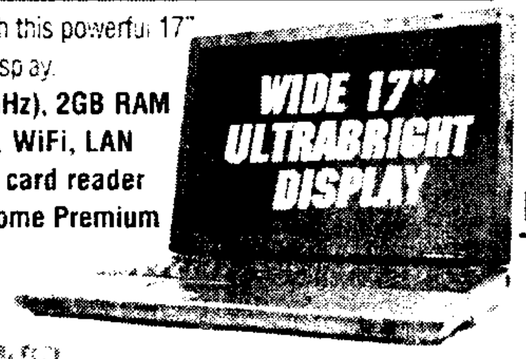

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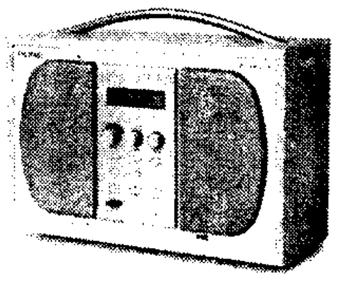

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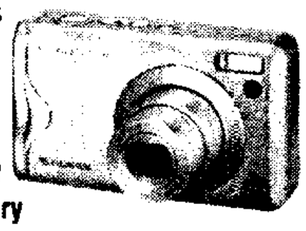

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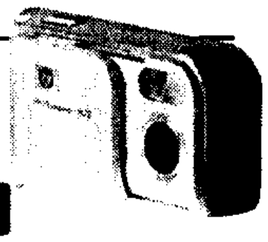

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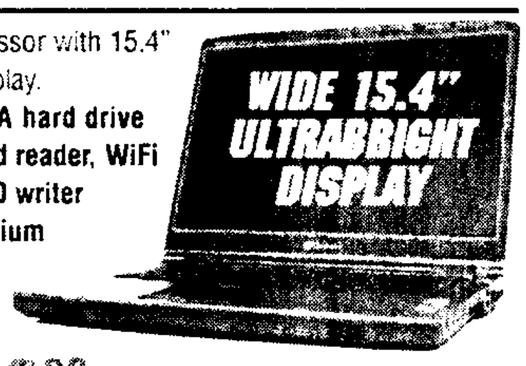

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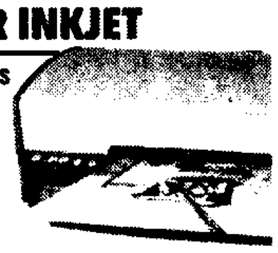

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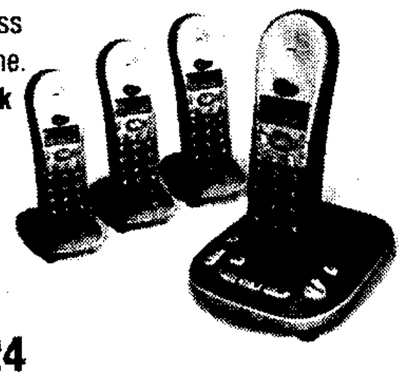

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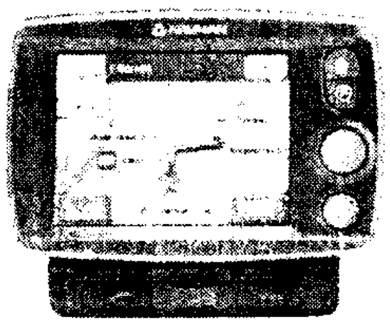

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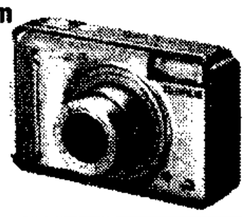

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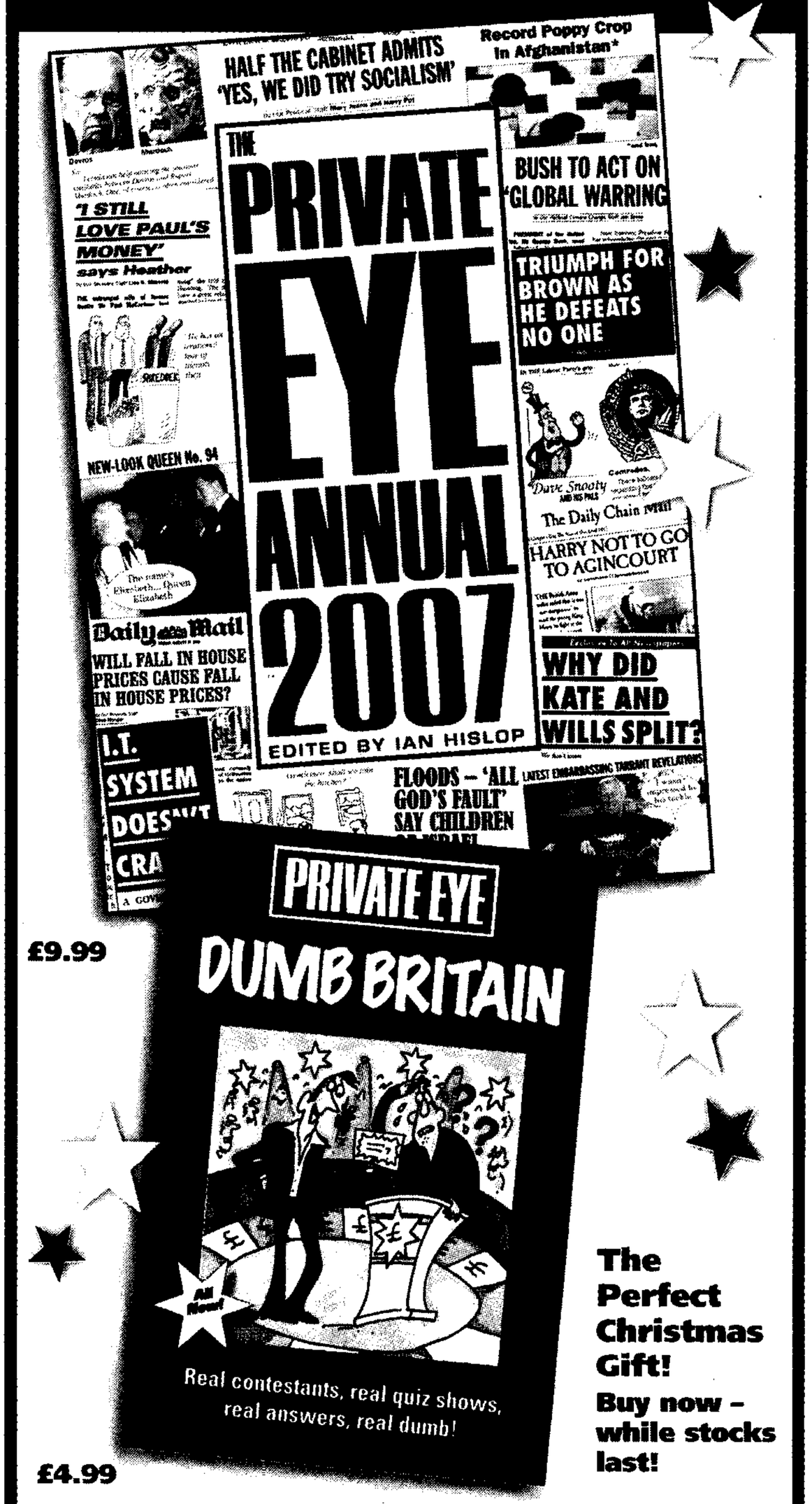
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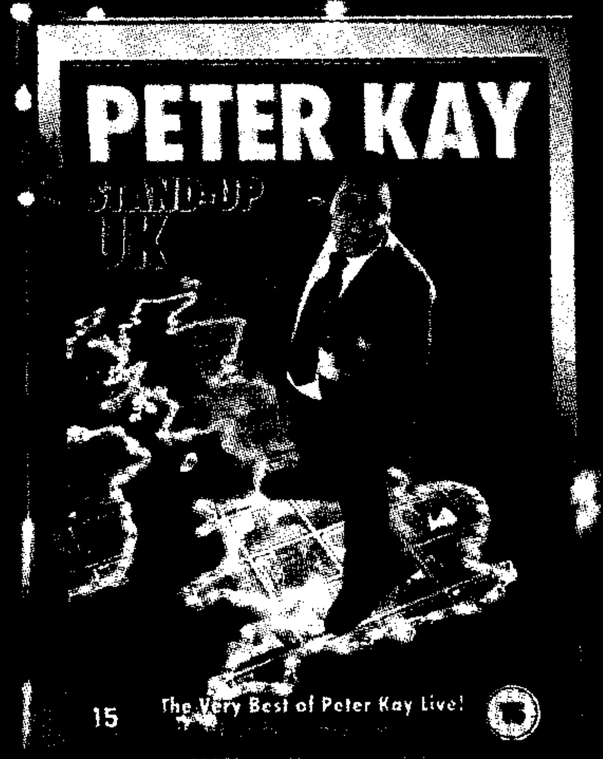

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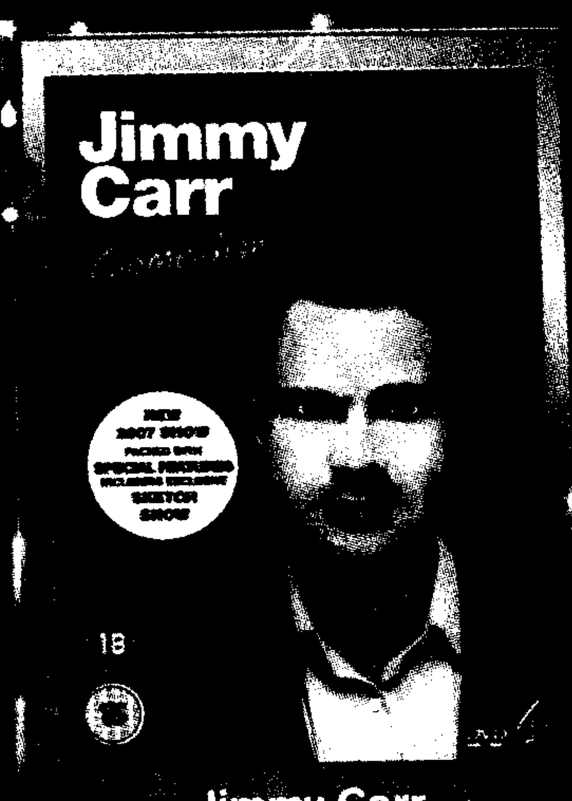

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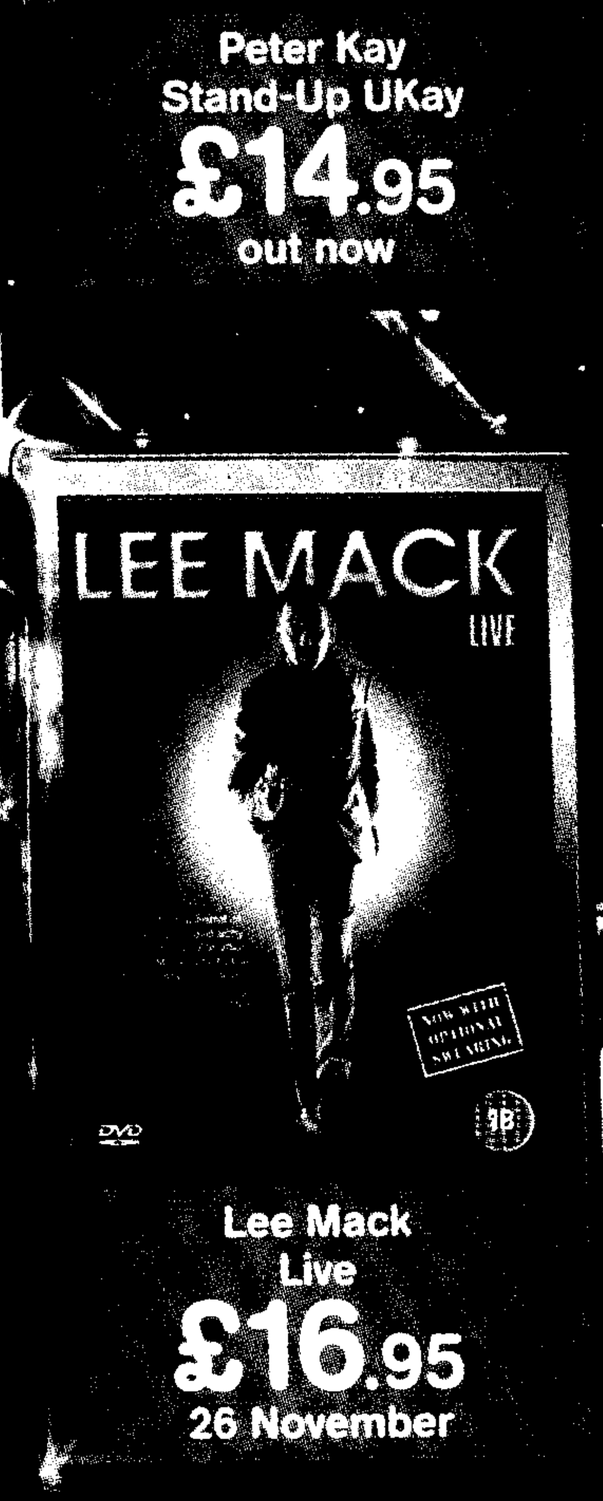

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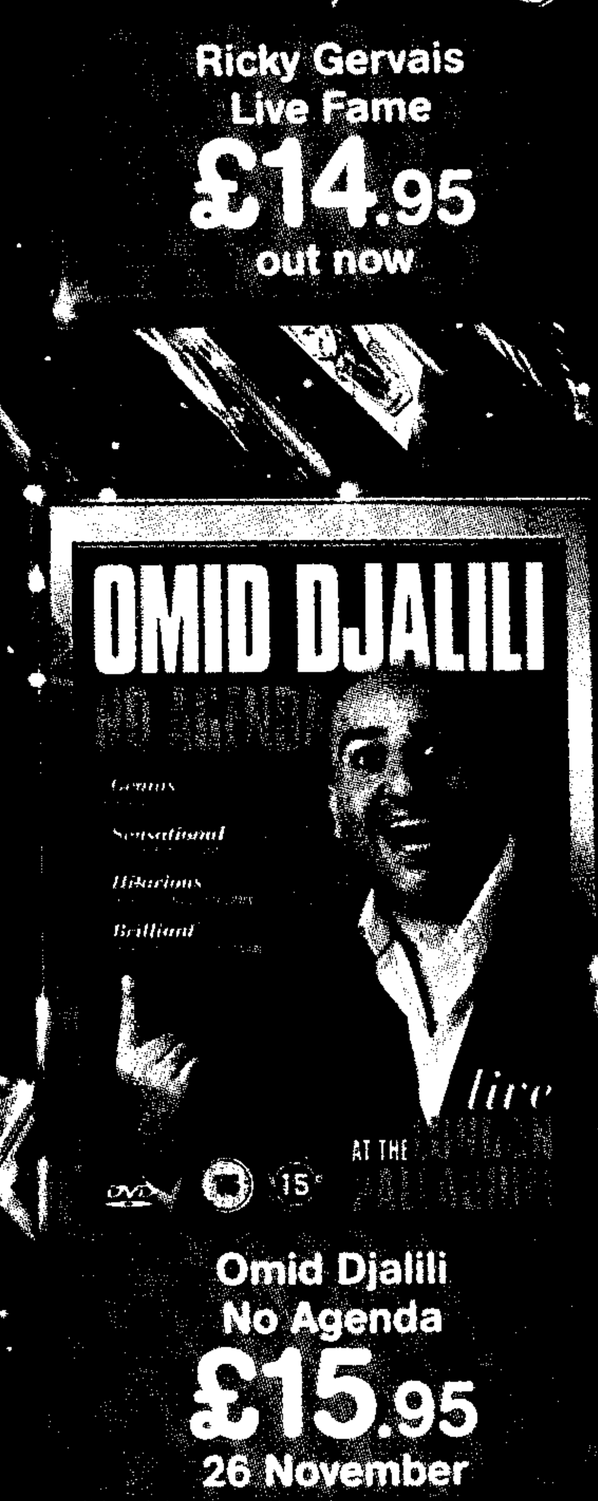

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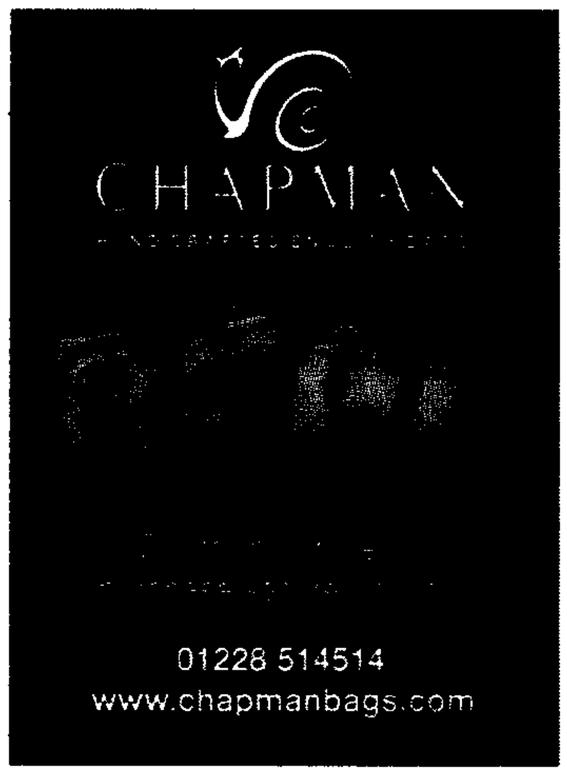

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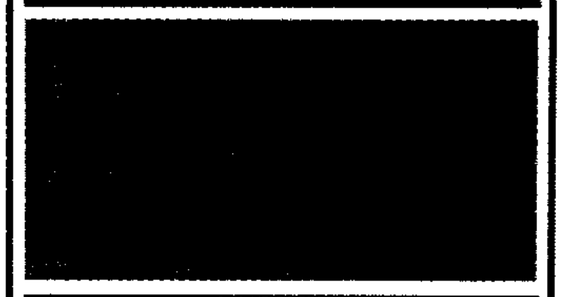

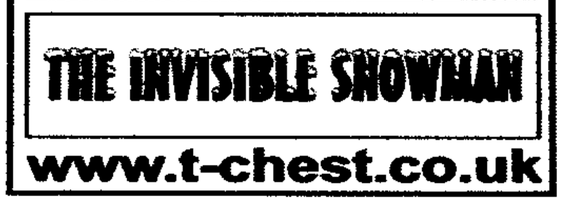

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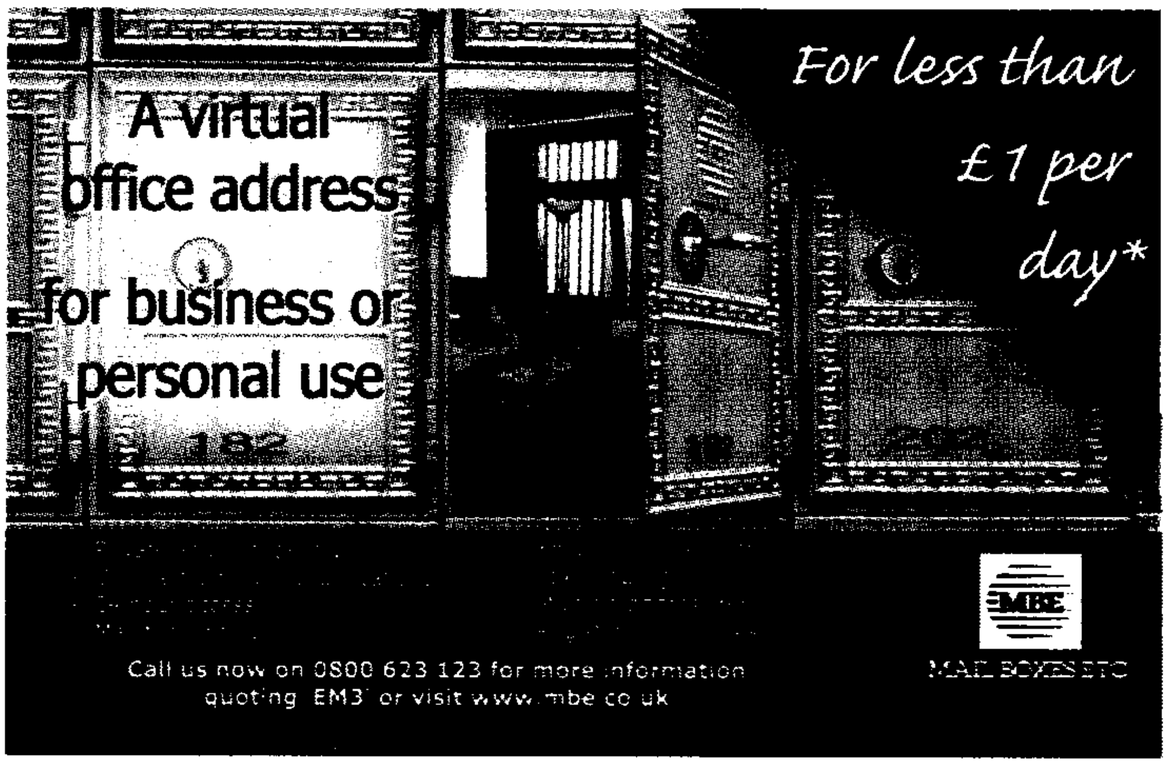
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Indeed, so successful is ***Mr. Daswani***, that - a little unnervingly as he is measuring you up - he freely admits he doesn't really need to work anymore: 'My team is as experienced as I am. But I just love men's suits and I wouldn't feel right sitting at home. It's not a business, it's a mission.

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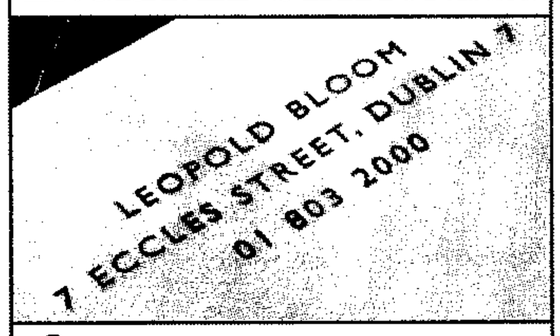

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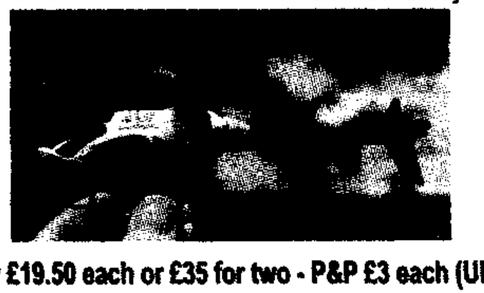

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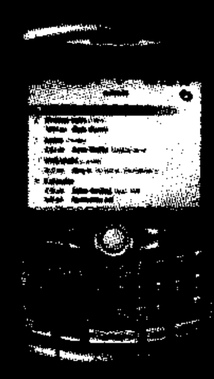

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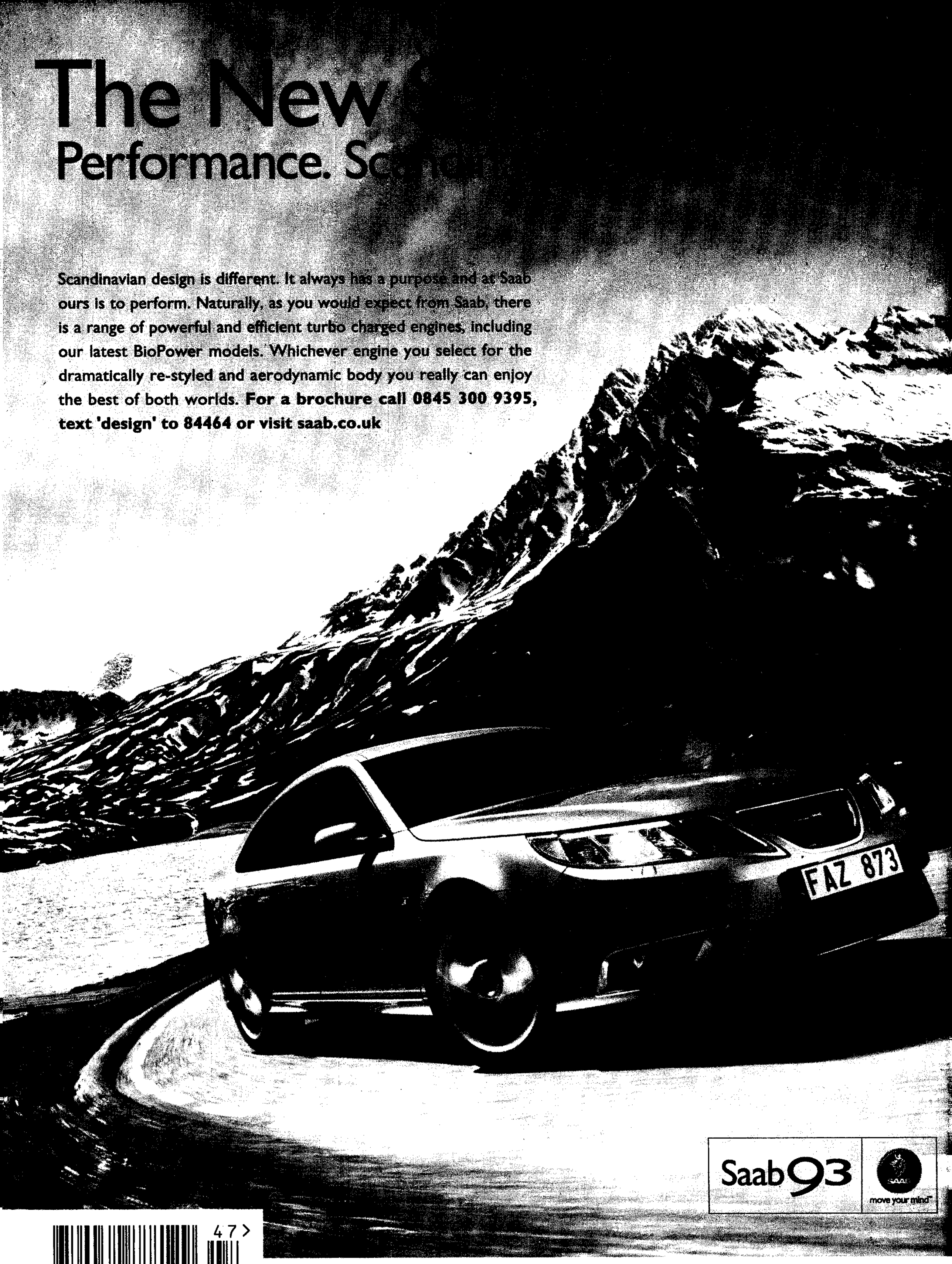

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